00067053

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016

G. Knaller p. G. Vertue sc.

The Rt. Reverend Father in GOD
FRANCIS Lord Bishop of ROCHESTER
and DEAN of WESTMINSTER
Obt. 1731. Ætat. 69.

SERMONS

AND

DISCOURSES

ON SEVERAL

SUBJECTS

AND

OCCASIONS.

BY

FRANCIS ATTERBURY, D.D.
Late Lord Biſhop of ROCHESTER,
and Dean of WESTMINSTER.

67053

VOL. I.

The SEVENTH EDITION.

LONDON,
Printed for L. DAVIS and C. REYMERS, againſt *Gray's-Inn, Holborn*; B. DOD, in *Ave-Mary-Lane*; J. RIVINGTON, in *St. Paul's Church-yard*; W. JOHNSTON, in *Ludgate-ſtreet*; and M. COOPER, in *Pater-noſter Row*.
MDCCLXI.

00067053

TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

JONATHAN,

By Divine Permiſſion,

Lord Biſhop of *Wincheſter*,

AND

Prelate of the Moſt Noble Order of the GARTER.

May it pleaſe Your Lordſhip,

TO accept this public Teſtimony of Gratitude, from a Man who ſtands indebted to Your LORDSHIP for many Favours, great in themſelves, but made much greater by Your free and generous Manner of conferring them. For they were not the Effects of Importunity, or the juſt Rewards of Domeſtic Service; they ſprang not

from Dependence, or Acquaintance; being beſtowed on One, who was (at the firſt) little known to your Lordſhip, otherwiſe than by his honeſt Endeavours to retrieve thoſe *Synodical Rights* of the Clergy, whereof You, my LORD, have been all along, to your great Honour, the avowed Patron and Defender.

I mention not this Inſtance of Your LORDSHIP's Goodneſs to Me, with any View of diſtinguiſhing myſelf from Others: For You have done nothing in My Caſe, but what You have frequently practiſed ſince the Time that Divine Providence, for the Good of this Church, raiſed You to the Epiſcopal Dignity; Nothing, but what hath been ſucceſſively acknowledged by all Thoſe who have prefixed your Right Reverend Name to their Labours, from the Learned and Venerable

Dr.

Dr. *Pocock*, down to the mean Author of the following Sermons. And, while Your LORDSHIP continues to repeat the ſame Acts of Generoſity, You muſt be contented to receive the very ſame Acknowledgments; ſince We, who ſhare the Obligations, can ſcarce find a better Way of expreſſing our Thanks and doing Juſtice to Your Character, than by informing the World, Why, and How they were derived to us.

The Secrecy, with which Wiſe Stateſmen conduct their Deſigns for the Public Good, ſo as that the Execution alone ſhall make the Diſcovery, hath by Your LORDSHIP been as carefully obſerved in Your Private Schemes of Beneficence; which have ſeldom appeared till they took Effect, and ſurpriſed even Thoſe, who were moſt nearly inter-

eſted in the Succeſs of them. By this means, You have, after the beſt manner, forbidden all Applications, by rendering them, not only unneceſſary, but impracticable; and have enjoyed to the utmoſt both the Honour, and the Pleaſure of well-doing.

Indeed, there is ſcarce any Virtue, which either diſpoſes the Mind to deſerve well of Others, or adds Comelineſs and Grace to deſerving Actions, that doth not manifeſtly appear and ſhine in Your LORDSHIP: And by theſe Recommending Circumſtances, You engage the very Hearts of thoſe You Oblige, and double the Value of every Kindneſs You do them.

To give, *hoping* (and looking) *for nothing again*, is the Goſpel-Rule of Beneficence; and Your LORDSHIP hath ſtrictly obſerved it. For none of your Gifts have been

clogged with Conditions; You have expected no Returns, but what every one, who hath a thankful Mind, and a juſt Senſe of his Duty, would even chooſe and delight to pay: You have aimed only at doing as became You in Your high Station; and when Thoſe, whom You advanced, did likewiſe as became them in *Their* Stations, your Deſires were anſwered, and You had your Reward.

It is well known, with what Courteſy and Eaſe You have always treated Thoſe, whom You have once obliged; on that very Account they were ſure of having a nearer and freer Acceſs to Your LORDSHIP, inſtead of being kept to the Uſual Terms of Diſtance and Dependance. You have been ſo far from ever putting any Man in Mind of what You have done for

him, that You would never bear to be put in mind of it Yourſelf; and have not been more careful to prevent Solicitations, than to avoid Acknowledgments. You had the Thanks of Your Own Conſcience, and You neither needed, nor deſired any other.

It is the peculiar Happineſs of thoſe Perſons, on whom Your Favours are placed; that they receive them from an Hand eminent for its great and laſting Services to our Church and Conſtitution. For there are, I think, no Enemies whatſoever, either of her Doctrine, Diſcipline, or Worſhip (either within Doors, or without) but what Your LORDSHIP hath, in the Courſe of your Epiſcopal Government, withſtood, and baffled.

You were one of thoſe *Seven Prelates* (worthy of honourable Remem-

brance) who gave the moſt Effectual Check to the attempts of *Popery* in a late Reign, and preſerved the pure Profeſſion of Chriſtianity among us by the ſame Suffering Methods, by which it was at firſt propagated. It can never be forgotten, with what a true Chriſtian Spirit (ſuch as animated the chief Paſtors of the Church, in thoſe Days, when Epiſcopacy was a certain Step to Martyrdom) You ſtood forth, and offered yourſelf willingly to *witneſs a good Confeſſion*; how Solicitous You were, leſt the *Tower-Gates* ſhould have been ſhut upon thoſe Excellent Perſons, ere Your Diſtance would permit You to accompany them in their glorious Confinement; to partake of which, You made as much Haſte, as ſome Men afterwards did, to draw the

Ad-

Advantages of it to themſelves, under a new Turn of Affairs.

When that happened, New Occaſions alſo of ſerving the Church, offered themſelves to Your Lordſhip, which You as readily embraced. The Fatherly Vigilance, and Exemplary Firmneſs you then ſhewed in fruſtrating the Methods made Uſe of to perpetuate *Schiſm*, by unauthorized *Schools* and *Seminaries*, were obſerved with Pleaſure, and owned with Thanks by All that wiſhed well to our Eſtabliſhment. Nor could they, who wiſhed ill to it, juſtly blame an Endeavour of ſecuring to the *Ordinary* that Power, which he always enjoyed, and of which he is not yet diveſted; and of confining a Legal Indulgence within the Bounds preſcribed by that Law, which gave Birth to it.

Shall

Shall I take notice here, of the Seaſonable and Liberal Encouragements You reached out to a Worthy *Preſbyter* of this Church, who repreſſed the bold Attempts of *Sectaries* by his Learned and Accurate Writings? It may, I think, become me to mention even this particular Act of Your Bounty, ſince it had a General Aim and Influence, and was not terminated in the *Perſon*, how deſerving ſoever, but in the Righteous *Cauſe* which he eſpouſed; and which as Your LORDSHIP's fixed Judgment leads You, by all Lawful Means to ſupport, ſo your Temper inclines You rather to promote by Rewards than Puniſhments.

The Fears of Popery were ſcarce removed, when *Hereſy* began to diffuſe its Venom; and the ſacred Myſteries of our Faith were, after a dar-

a daring and petulant manner, expoſed to public Scorn, even in one of thoſe famous *Seats* of *Knowledge*, which then were, and ſtill are the chief Bulwarks of true Religion. It pleaſed God, that You were now poſſeſſed of a *See*, which gave You Power to Viſit and Correct ſuch Enormities; and You exerted that Power with Zeal and Vigour; driving out from the Schools of Learning a Diſciple of *Arius*, who had all the Craft and Obſtinacy of his Maſter, and the Good-luck, for ſome time, to be as well Supported. The Proſecution of this Cauſe was attended with ſo many Difficulties, as would have ſhaken a Reſolution leſs firm than Your LORDSHIP's. But the Diſcharge of Your great Truſt, and the Maintenance of God's Truth, were the Springs which had ſet You on work;

and They who act upon ſuch Principles, can never be diſcouraged.

The Iſſue of that memorable Struggle, as it was of great Advantage to the Church, and the Univerſities, in Other Reſpects, ſo particularly in This, that it fixed the Power of *Viſitors* (not till then acknowledged Final) upon the ſure Foundation of a *Judgment* in *Parliament*; and by that means, made ſo effectual a Proviſion for the future Quiet of thoſe Learned Bodies, as may be reckoned equal to the greateſt Benefactions.

This, and another Parliamentary Deciſion, which Your LORDSHIP, not long after, with equal Difficulty, obtained; and by which the *Biſhops* ſole Right to judge of the *Qualifications* of *Perſons* applying for *Inſtitution*, was unalterably confirmed; are ſuch Inſtances of Your Mag-

Magnanimity, and Public Spirit, as will remain in Memory, while the Church or the Law of *England* laſts. For they were not Temporary Services, to be made uſe of, and talked of for a while, and then forgotten; but (as the Hiſtorian truly ſaid of his own Writings) *Perpetual Acquiſitions*, laid up for the Benefit of ſucceeding Ages. And He who contends for Common Rights, with Lower Aims than theſe, means not the Conſtitution, but Himſelf; and deſerves not the Applauſe even of his Own Times, when he is not diſintereſted enough to look beyond them.

It was the Senſe of theſe Important Services, already done by Your LORDSHIP, that occaſioned a general Joy among good Men, when they heard of Your intended Tranſlation to the See of *Wincheſter*.

Particularly, the Clergy of that Dioceſe, and the Univerſity of *Oxford*, who were chiefly concerned in the Conſequences of Your Promotion, received the firſt Accounts of it with the greateſt Satisfaction, and were in Pain, while the Event was ſuſpended---A Suſpenſe which we may preſume deſigned to do Honour to Your LORDSHIP, and to juſtify the Wiſdom of Her Majeſty's Choice; ſince it tended to ſhew how impatiently You were expected, and deſired, by Thoſe who were to be under Your Inſpection and Authority.

Among all the Learned Bodies, whoſe Hopes and Fears were then in greateſt Agitation, None was more (or with more Reaſon) ſolicitous than that *Houſe*, which had the Honour of Educating Your LORDSHIP, and inſtilling into Your Mind

thoſe

thoſe Principles, which whoever hath once imbibed, ſeldom forſakes; and whoſoever forſakes not, muſt immoveably adhere to the true Intereſts of the Church, and Monarchy. Whilſt that fruitful Parent thus trains up her Children, She is ſecure of Protection and Favour from Your LORDSHIP, or from Whoever elſe He be, that hath not been with-held from doing Good to her, in Evil Days, by malicious and groundleſs Clamours. Under Your and Their Shadow She hath *reſted at Noon*, when the Heat was moſt intenſe and ſcorching. She hath flouriſhed hitherto, and will, I doubt not, ſtill continue to flouriſh, though Her Enemies be Many and Mighty, and daily *ſhoot out their Arrows againſt her, even bitter Words.* She looks upon your LORDSHIP's Advancement, as a ſure

Token, that Divine Providence is ſtill propitious to Her; and, encouraged by this Proſpect, She is ready to take up her Parable, and ſay: Joſeph *is a fruitful Bough, even a fruitful Bough by a Well, whoſe Branches run over the Wall. The Archers have ſorely grieved him, and ſhot at him, and hated him: but his Bow abode in Strength, and the Arms of his Hands were made ſtrong by the Hands of the mighty God of* Jacob: *from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of* Iſrael.

In the Names of Theſe, and of all Other the true Friends and Sons of the Church, permit me, My Lord, to congratulate Your Acceſſion to a *See*, which will afford You ſuch a Sphere of Action as You were made to fill; which will furniſh You with many welcome Opportunities of doing Good, of

rewarding Merit, of cheriſhing Piety and Virtue, of encouraging Perſons, diſtinguiſhed by their Learning, their undaunted Aſſertion of Divine Truths, and undiſſembled Zeal for our admirable Conſtitution in Church and State; which will, in ſhort, enable You to carry on all thoſe Excellent Deſigns, to which Your Upright and Bountiful Heart is religiouſly inclined.

What may We not promiſe ourſelves from the Influence of your LORDSHIP's Conduct in ſo Eminent a Station? from Your known Courage and Fervency in the Cauſe of God, and his Church? from the Greatneſs of Your Mind, the Goodneſs of Your Intentions, and the Soundneſs of Your Principles? from that Habitual Love of *Worthy Deeds*, which You contracted ſo early, and have by long Practice confirmed?

and from your Experience of the Succeſs that hath attended You in all You have ſuffered, or done for the Public?

By Your LORDSHIP's Means, and within the Circle of your Power, we doubt not but to ſee all proper Steps taken towards reviving decayed Diſcipline; and reſtoring Church Cenſures to their due Force and Credit; towards detecting and defeating Clandeſtine Simoniacal Contracts; towards ſecuring the Rights and Revenues of the Clergy from Encroachments, reſcuing their Perſons and ſacred Function from Contempt, and freeing Religion itſelf from the Inſults now made upon it by Blaſphemous Tongues, and Pens, with equal Boldneſs and Impunity.

Theſe, MY LORD, are the Expectations with which the beſt Men

are now entertaining themſelves, and which You are haſtening to make good. The Actions of the paſt Years of Your Life are a ſure Earneſt and Pledge of what thoſe to come will produce; and the bright Example You have ſet long ago to Yourſelf and to Others, ſhall grow brighter in Proportion to Your Power and Opportunities: for *the Path of the Juſt is as the Shining Light, that ſhineth more and more unto a perfect Day.*

The great Honours and Revenues, ſtill annexed to ſome few Stations in the Church, are the chief Mark which Impiety, Envy, and Sacrilege aim at; and much they have to ſay, why Religion ſhould be ſtripped of theſe ſuperfluous and unprofitable Ornaments. But Malice itſelf is diſarmed, and all Objections are ſilenced, when

thoſe Rewards are beſtowed on Men, who, by their Birth, and Virtues, and Experience, are every way qualified for them; whoſe Hereditary Fortunes, and Noble Natures, ſet them above all mean Deſigns of diverting the Patrimony of the Church to improper Uſes; and who are ready therefore to reflect back upon Religion the Advantages they derive from thence, and to abound in all the Offices of Hoſpitality and Charity, in proportion to what they enjoy. I need not ſay, how far theſe Excellent Qualities belong to Your LORDSHIP, and are a confeſſed Part of your Character.

When we compare the Good which You have done, My LORD, with that which You have received, it brings to mind the Appoſite Paſſage of the Prophet: *The Liberal deviſeth*

deviſeth Liberal Things, and by Liberal Things ſhall he be eſtabliſhed. Your LORDSHIP is an Illuſtrious Inſtance of this Truth; for the Bleſſings You have ſo plentifully ſcattered on thoſe beneath You, have been multiplied on Your own Head from above; and You have reaped the Benefits of a moſt generous and firm Friendſhip, in like Manner as You ſowed them. *You have given,* MY LORD, *and it hath been givin unto You; good Meaſure, preſſed down, ſhaken together, and running over: for with the ſame Meaſure, which You meted withal, hath it been* (and may it ever be) *meaſured to you again.*

Your Happineſs, MY LORD, is now as complete as all the Proſperous Circumſtances of Life can make it; and your Private Domeſtic Felicities (a Caſe rarely known)

are no ways inferior to thoſe of a more Public and Splendid Nature. For You are happy in the beſt of *Ladies*, as She is in the Tendereſt of Huſbands; You have the beſt of *Brothers*, and the beſt of *Children*; thoſe *Arrows in the Hand of the Mighty Man*, which are both his Ornament and Defence: God be thanked, your *Quiver is full of them!* And *He* amongſt them, who is to inherit Your Ample Fortunes, doth, by his Early Love of Learning, and moſt Virtuous Diſpoſition, promiſe, that he will one day do Honour even to that Honourable Stock from which he ſprings.

With ſuch a Variety of Bleſſings hath God ſurrounded You! and, that nothing may be wanting, he hath bleſſed You likewiſe with a Heart and Skill to uſe them. May

You,

You, through his Goodneſs, enjoy an uninterrupted Continuance of them; and ſuch a Length of Days, as will give You Room to improve them to the utmoſt, for His Glory and the Public Benefit.

This, My Lord, is the Unanimous Wiſh of all that have been obliged by You, of all that Honour You; that is, of all that truly Know You; but of none more than Him, who now offers theſe *Sermons* to Your Lordship, and, with that Sincerity which becomes a Preacher of Divine Truth, profeſſes himſelf to be, by all the Ties of Eſteem and Duty, Gratitude and Inclination,

Your Lordship's

Moſt Devoted, and

Ever Faithful Servant,

FR. ATTERBURY.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

The Duty of Praiſe and Thankſgiving.

PSAL. L. 50.

OFFER unto GOD Thankſgiving. Pag. 1.

SERMON II.

The Power of Charity to cover Sin.

1 PET. iv. 8.

Charity ſhall Cover the Multitude of Sins. 37.

SERMONS III, IV.
The Miraculous Propagation of the Goſpel.

ISAIAH lx. 22.

A little One ſhall become a Thouſand; and a Small One a ſtrong Nation: I the Lord will haſten it in his time. 89

SERMON V.
A Scorner incapable of True Wiſdom.

PROV. xiv. 6.

A Scorner ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not. 171

SERMON VI.
A Diſcourſe occaſioned by the Death of the Lady *Cutts*.

ECCLES. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than to go to the Houſe of Feaſting: for

for that is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to Heart. 203

SERMON VII.

The Wiſdom of Providence manifeſted in the Revolutions of Government.

EZEK. xxxvii. 3.

And he ſaid unto me, Son of Man, can theſe Bones live? And I anſwered, O Lord God, Thou knoweſt. 243

SERMON VIII.

The Duty of Public Interceſſion and Thankſgiving for Princes.

1 TIM. ii. 1, 2, 3.

I exhort, that firſt of all Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men; for Kings, and all that are in Authority; that We may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty: for this is Good and Acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour. 277

SER-

SERMON IX.

The Rule of Doing as we would be Done unto, explained.

St. MATTH. vii. 12.

All things, whatſoever Ye would that Men ſhould do unto You, do ye even ſo unto them; for this is the Law and the Prophets. 311

SERMON X.

Of Religious Retirement.

St. MATTH. xiv. 23.

When he had ſent the Multitude away, he went up into a Mountain, apart, to Pray. 347

The Duty of Praiſe *and* Thankſgiving.

A SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

MAY 29, 1692.

PSALM L. 14.

Offer unto God Thankſgiving.

AMONG the many Excellen- SERM.
cies of this pious Collection of I.
Hymns, for which ſo particu-
lar a Value hath been ſet upon it by the Church of God in all Ages, this is not

SERM. I. the leaſt, that the true Price of Duties is there juſtly ſtated; Men are called off from reſting in the outward Shew of Religion, in Ceremonies and Ritual Obſervances; and taught rather to practiſe (that which was ſhadowed out by theſe Rites, and to which they are deſigned to lead) ſound inward Virtue and Piety.

The ſeveral Compoſers of theſe Hymns were *Prophets*; Perſons, whoſe Buſineſs it was, not only to fortel Events, for the Benefit of the Church in ſucceeding Times, but to correct and reform alſo what was amiſs in that Race of Men, with whom they lived and converſed; to preſerve a fooliſh People from Idolatry, and falſe Worſhip; to reſcue the Law from corrupt Gloſſes, and ſuperſtitious Abuſes; and to put Men in mind of (what they were ſo willing to forget) that Eternal and Invariable Rule, which was before theſe *Poſitive* Duties, would continue after them, and was to be obſerved, even Then, in preference to them.

The

SERM. I.

The Diſcharge, I ſay, of this Part of the Prophetic Office taking up ſo much room in the Book of *Pſalms*; this hath been one Reaſon, among many others, why they have been always ſo highly eſteemed; becauſe we are from hence furniſhed with a proper Reply to an Argument commonly made uſe of by Unbelievers; who look upon all revealed Religions, as Pious Frauds, and Impoſtures, on the Account of the Prejudices they have entertained in relation to That of the *Jews*: The whole of which they firſt ſuppoſe to lie in External Performances, and then eaſily perſuade themſelves, that God could never be the Author of ſuch a mere Piece of Pageantry, and empty Formality, nor delight in a Worſhip, which conſiſted purely in a Number of odd unaccountable Ceremonies. Which Objection of theirs we ſhould not be able thoroughly to anſwer, unleſs we could prove (chiefly out of the *Pſalms*, and other Parts of the Prophetic Writings) that the Jewiſh Religion was ſomewhat more than bare Outſide

SERM. I. and Show; and that Inward Purity, and the Devotion of the Heart was a Duty Then, as well as Now. One great Inſtance of this Proof we have in the Words now before us; which are taken from a Pſalm of *Aſaph*, written on purpoſe to ſet out the Weakneſs and Worthleſſneſs of External Performances, when compared with more Subſtantial and Vital Duties. To enforce which Doctrine, God himſelf is brought in, as delivering it. *Hear, O my People, and I will ſpeak, O* Iſrael, *and I will teſtify againſt thee: I am God, even thy God.* The Preface is very ſolemn; and therefore what it uſhers in, we may be ſure is of no common Importance: *I will not reprove thee for thy Sacrifices, or thy Burnt-Offerings, to have been continually before me.* That is, I will not ſo reprove thee for any Failures in thy Sacrifices and Burnt-Offerings, as if Theſe were the Only, or the Chief Things I required of thee. *I will take no Bullock out of thy Houſe, nor He-goat out of thy Folds.* I preſcribed not Sacrifices to thee, for my own ſake, becauſe

becauſe I needed them: *For every Beaſt of the Foreſt is mine, and the Cattle upon a thouſand Hills.* Mine they are, and were, before ever I commanded thee to offer them to Me; ſo that (as it follows) *If I were hungry, yet would I not tell thee; for the World is Mine, and the Fulneſs thereof.* But can ye be ſo groſs and ſenſeleſs, as to think me liable to Hunger and Thirſt? as to imagine that Wants of that kind can touch me? *Will I eat the Fleſh of Bulls, or drink the Blood of Goats?*—— Thus doth he expoſtulate ſeverely with them, after the moſt graceful manner of the Eaſtern Poetry. The Iſſue of which is, a plain and full Reſolution of the Caſe, in thoſe few Words of the Text.——*Offer unto God Thankſgiving.* Would you do your Homage the moſt agreeable Way? would you render the moſt acceptable of Services? *Offer unto God Thankſgiving.* SERM. I.

The Uſe I intend to make of theſe Words, is, from hence to raiſe ſome Thoughts about that very excellent and important Duty of Praiſe and Thankſ-

SERM. I. giving: A Subject, not unfit to be diſcourſed of, at this Time; whether we conſider, either the more than ordinary Coldneſs that appears of late in Men's Tempers towards the Practice of this (or any other) Part of a warm and affecting Devotion; the Great Occaſion of ſetting aſide this particular Day in the Calendar, ſome Years ago; or the New Inſtances of Mercy and Goodneſs, which God hath lately been pleaſed to beſtow upon us: anſwering at laſt the many *Prayers* and *Faſtings*, by which we have beſought him ſo long for the Eſtabliſhment of their Majeſties Throne, and for the Succeſs of their Arms; and giving us, in his own good Time, an Opportunity of appearing before him in the more delightful Part of our Duty, *with the Voice of Joy and Praiſe, with a Multitude that keep Holy-day.*

Pſal. xlii. 4.

Offer unto God Thankſgiving---Which that we may do, let us enquire firſt, how we are to *Underſtand* this Command of Offering Praiſe and Thankſgiving unto God;

God; and then how *Reaſonable* it is that we ſhould comply with it. SERM. I.

Our Enquiry into what is *meant* here, will be very ſhort: For who is there, that underſtands any thing of Religion but knows, that the offering Praiſe and Thanks to God implies, our having a lively and devout Senſe of his Excellencies, and of his Benefits; our recollecting them with Humility and Thankfulneſs of heart; and our expreſſing theſe inward Affections by ſuitable outward Signs; by reverent and lowly Poſtures of Body, by Songs, and Hymns, and Spiritual Ejaculations; either Privately, or Publickly; either in the Cuſtomary and Daily Service of the Church, or in its more ſolemn aſſemblies, convened upon Extraordinary Occaſions? This is the Account, which every Chriſtian eaſily gives himſelf of it; and which, therefore, it would be needleſs to enlarge upon. I ſhall only take notice on this Head, That Praiſe and Thankſgiving do, in Strictneſs of Speech, ſignify things ſomewhat different. Our

SERM. I. *Praiſe* properly terminates in God, on the account of his natural Excellencies and Perfections; and is that Act of Devotion by which we confeſs and admire his ſeveral Attributes: But *Thankſgiving* is a narrower Duty, and imports only a grateful Senſe and Acknowledgment of paſt Mercies. We praiſe God for all his glorious Acts, of every kind, that regard either Us, or Other Men; for his very *Vengeance*, and thoſe *Judgments* which he ſometimes ſends *abroad in the Earth*; But we thank him (properly ſpeaking) for the Inſtances of his *Goodneſs* alone; and for ſuch only of theſe, as We ourſelves are ſome way concerned in. This, I ſay, is what the two Words ſtrictly imply: But ſince the Language of Scripture is generally leſs exact, and uſeth Either of them often to expreſs the Other by, I ſhall not think myſelf obliged, in what follows, thus nicely always to diſtinguiſh them.

Now the great *Reaſonableneſs* of this Duty of Praiſe or Thankſgiving, and our ſeveral *Obligations* to it, will appear; if

we

we either conſider it *abſolutely* in itſelf, as the Debt of our Natures; or *compare* it with other Duties, and ſhew the Rank it bears among them; or ſet out, in the laſt place, ſome of its peculiar *Properties* and *Advantages*, with regard to the devout Performer of it. SERM. 1.

I. The Duty of Praiſe and Thankſgiving conſidered *abſolutely* in itſelf, is, I ſay, the Debt, and Law of our Nature. We had ſuch Faculties beſtowed on us by our Creator, as made us capable of ſatisfying this Debt, and obeying this Law; and they never, therefore, work more naturally and freely, than when they are thus employed.

'Tis one of the earlieſt Inſtructions given us by Philoſophy, and which hath ever ſince been approved and inculcated by the wiſeſt Men of all Ages, That the Original Deſign of making Man was, that he might Praiſe and Honour Him who made him. When God had finiſhed this goodly Frame of Things, we call *the World*, and put together the ſeveral

Parts

SERM. I. Parts of it, according to his infinite Wiſdom, in exact Number, Weight, and Meaſure; there was ſtill wanting a Creature in theſe lower Regions, that could apprehend the Beauty, Order, and exquiſite Contrivance of it; that from contemplating the Gift, might be able to raiſe itſelf up to the great Giver, and do Honour to all his Attributes. Every thing indeed that God made, did, in ſome Senſe, glorify its Author, inaſmuch as it carried upon it the plain Mark and Impreſs of the Deity, and was an Effect worthy of that firſt Cauſe from whence it flowed; and Thus might the *Heavens* be ſaid, at the firſt Moment in which Pſal. xix, 1. they ſtood forth, *to declare his Glory, and the Firmament to ſhew his Handy-work:* But this was an imperfect, and defective Glory; the Sign was of no Signification here below, whilſt there was no one here as yet to take Notice of it. Man, therefore, was formed to ſupply this Want; endued with Powers fit to find out, and to acknowledge theſe unlimited Perfections; and then put into this Temple

ple of God, this lower World, as the Prieſt of Nature, to offer up the Incenſe of Thanks and Praiſe for the mute and the inſenſible Part of the Creation. SERM. I.

This, I ſay, hath been the Opinion all along of the moſt thoughtful Men, down from the moſt ancient Times: And tho' it be not Demonſtrative, yet is it what we cannot but judge highly reaſonable, if we do but allow, that Man was made for ſome End or other; and that he is capable of perceiving that End. For then, let us ſearch and enquire never ſo much, we ſhall find no Other Account of him that we can reſt upon ſo well. If we ſay, That he was made purely for the good Pleaſure of God; this is, in effect, to ſay, that he was made for no Determinate End; or for none, at leaſt, that We can diſcern. If we ſay, That he was deſigned as an Inſtance of the Wiſdom, and Power, and Goodneſs of God; this indeed may be the Reaſon of his *Being* in general; for 'tis the common Reaſon of the Being of every thing beſides. But it gives no Account, why he was made

SERM. I. made *ſuch* a Being as he is, a reflecting, thoughtful, inquiſitive Being: The particular Reaſon of this ſeems moſt aptly to be drawn from the Praiſe and Honour that was (not only to redound to God from him, but) to be given to God by him.

This Duty, therefore, is the Debt and Law of our Nature. And it will more diſtinctly appear to be ſuch, if we conſider the two Ruling Faculties of our Mind, the *Underſtanding* and the *Will*, apart; in both which it is deeply founded: In the Underſtanding, as in the Principle of Reaſon, which owns and acknowledges it; in the Will, as in the Fountain of Gratitude and Return, which prompts, and even conſtrains us to pay it.

Reaſon was given us as a Rule and Meaſure, by the Help of which we were to proportion our Eſteem of every thing, according to the Degrees of Perfection and Goodneſs which we found in it. It cannot, therefore, if it doth its Office at all, but apprehend God as the beſt and moſt perfect Being; it muſt needs ſee, and own, and admire his infinite Perfections,

fections. And this is what is ſtrictly meant by *Praiſe*; which, therefore, is expreſſed in Scripture by *confeſſing* to *God*, and *acknowledging* him; by *aſcribing* to him what is his due; and, as far as This Senſe of the Words reaches, 'tis impoſſible to *think* of God without praiſing him. For it depends not on the Underſtanding how it ſhall apprehend Things, any more than it doth on the Eye, how Viſible Objects ſhall appear to it. SERM. I.

The Duty takes the farther and ſurer Hold of us, by the Means of our *Will*, and that ſtrong Bent towards *Gratitude* which the Author of our Nature hath implanted in it. There is not a more active Principle than this in the Mind of Man; and ſurely, that which deſerves its utmoſt Force, and ſhould ſet all its Springs a-work, is God: the Great and Univerſal Benefactor, from whom alone we received whatever we either have, or are, and to whom we can poſſibly repay nothing but our Praiſes, or (to ſpeak more properly on this Head, and according to the ſtrict Import of the Word) our

SERM. I.

our Thankſgivings. *Who hath firſt given to God,* (ſaith the great Apoſtle in his uſual Figure) *and it ſhall be recompenſed unto him again?* A Gift, it ſeems, always requires a Recompence. Nay, but *of him, and through him, and to him are all things; Of him,* as the Author; *Thro' him,* as the Preſerver and Governor; *To him,* as the End and Perfection of all Things: *To whom therefore,* (as it follows) *be Glory for ever.* Amen!

Rom. xi. 35, 36.

Gratitude conſiſts in an equal Return of Benefits, if we are able; or of Thanks, if we are not: Which Thanks, therefore, muſt riſe always in Proportion as the Favours received are great, and the Receiver incapable of making any other Sort of Requital. Now, ſince no Man hath benefited God at any time, and yet every Man, in each Moment of his Life, is continually benefited by Him, what ſtrong Obligations muſt we needs be under to Thank him? 'Tis true, our Thanks are really as inſignificant to him, as any other Kind of Return would be; in themſelves indeed, they are worthleſs; but his

Goodneſs hath put a Value upon them: SERM.
He hath declared, he will accept them in I.
lieu of the vaſt Debt we owe: and, after
that, which is fitteſt for us, to diſpute how
they come to be taken as an *Equivalent*,
or to pay them?

It is, therefore, the Voice of Nature (as far as Gratitude itſelf is ſo) that the Good Things we receive from above, ſhould be ſent back again thither in Thanks and Praiſes, *as the Rivers run into the Sea; to the Place* (the Ocean of Beneficence) *from whence the Rivers come, thither* ſhould *they return again.* Eccleſ.i.7.

II. We have conſidered the Duty *abſolutely*; we are now to *compare* it with others, and to ſee what Rank it bears among them. And here we ſhall find, that, among all the Acts of Religion, immediately addreſſed to God, This is much the Nobleſt, and moſt Excellent; as it muſt needs be, if what hath been laid down be allowed, that the End of Man's Creation was, to praiſe and glorify God. For That cannot but be the moſt noble II.

and

SERM. I. and excellent Act of any Being, which beſt anſwers the End and Deſign of it. Other Parts of Devotion, ſuch as *Confeſſion* and *Prayer*, ſeem not Originally to have been deſigned for Man, nor Man for them. They imply *Guilt* and *Want*, with which the *State of Innocence* was not acquainted. Had Man continued in that Eſtate, his Worſhip (like the Devotions of Angels) had been paid to Heaven in pure Acts of Thankſgiving; and nothing had been left for him to do, beyond the enjoying the good Things of Life, as Nature directed, and praiſing the God of Nature who beſtowed them. But being fallen from Innocence, and Abundance; having contracted Guilt, and forfeited his Right to all Sorts of Mercies; Prayer and Confeſſion became neceſſary for a time, to retrieve the Loſs, and reſtore him to that State, wherein he ſhould be able to live without them. Theſe are fitted, therefore, for a lower Diſpenſation; before which, in Paradiſe, there was nothing but Praiſe, and after which, there ſhall be nothing but that,

in

Heaven. Our perfect State did at firſt, SERM. and will at laſt, conſiſt in the Performance I. of this Duty; and herein, therefore, lies the Excellence and the Honour of our Nature.

'Tis the ſame way of Reaſoning, by which the Apoſtle hath given the Preference to Charity, beyond Faith, and Hope, and every Spiritual Gift. *Charity* 1 Cor. xiii. *never faileth*, ſaith he; meaning, that it 8. is not a Virtue uſeful only in this Life, but will accompany us alſo into the Next: *But whether there be Propheſies, they ſhall fail; whether there be Tongues, they ſhall ceaſe; whether there be Knowledge, it ſhall vaniſh away:* Theſe are Gifts of a Temporary Advantage, and ſhall all periſh in the uſing. *For we know in part,* Ver. 9. *and we propheſy in part:* Our preſent State is imperfect; and, therefore, what belongs to That, and only That, muſt be imperfect too. *But when that which is Perfect* Ver. 10. *is come, then that which is in Part ſhall be done away.* The Argument of St. *Paul*, we ſee, which ſets Charity above the reſt of Chriſtian Graces, will give Praiſe

SERM. I. alſo the Pre-eminence over all the Parts of Chriſtian Worſhip; and we may conclude Our Reaſoning, therefore, as He doth his: *And now abideth Confeſſion, Prayer, and Praiſe, theſe three; but the greateſt of theſe is Praiſe.*

It is ſo, certainly, on other Accounts, as well as this; particularly, as it is the moſt *diſintereſted* Branch of our Religious Service; ſuch as hath the moſt of God, and the leaſt of Ourſelves in it, of any we pay; and therefore approaches the neareſt of any to a pure, and free, and perfect Act of Homage. For though a good Action doth not grow immediately worthleſs by being done with the Proſpect of Advantage, as ſome have ſtrangely imagined; yet it will be allowed, I ſuppoſe, that its being done without the Mixture of that End, or with as little of it as is poſſible, recommends it ſo much the more, and raiſes the Price of it. *Doth* Job i. 9. Job *fear God for nought?* was an Objection of Satan; which implied, that thoſe Duties were moſt valuable, where our own Intereſt was leaſt aimed at: And God

God ſeems, by the Commiſſion he then gave Satan, to try Experiments upon *Job*, thus far to have allowed his Plea. Now our Requeſts for future, and even our Acknowledgments of paſt Mercies, centre purely in ourſelves, our own Intereſt is the direct Aim of them. But Praiſe is a generous and unmercenary Principle, which propoſes no other End to itſelf, but to do, as is fit for a Creature endowed with ſuch Faculties to do, towards the moſt perfect and beneficent of Beings; and to pay the willing Tribute of Honour there, where the Voice of Reaſon directs us to pay it. God hath indeed annexed a Bleſſing to the Duty, and when we know this, we cannot chuſe, while we are performing the Duty, but have ſome Regard to the Bleſſing which belongs to it. However, that is not the direct Aim of our Devotions, nor was it even the Motive that ſtirred us up to them. Had it been ſo, we ſhould naturally have betaken ourſelves to Prayer, and breathed out our Deſires in That Form wherein they are moſt properly conveyed.

SERM. I.

SERM. I. In ſhort, Praiſe is our moſt excellent Work; a Work common to the Church Triumphant and Militant, and which lifts us up into a Communion and Fellowſhip with Angels. The Matter, about which it is converſant, is always the Perfections of God's Nature; and the Act itſelf is the Perfection of Ours.

III. I come now, in the laſt Place, to ſet out ſome of its peculiar *Properties and Advantages*, which recommend it to the Devout Performer. And,

1*ſt*, It is the moſt *pleaſing* Part of our Devotions. It proceeds always from a Lively, Chearful Temper of Mind; and it cheriſhes and improves what it proceeds from. *For it is good to ſing Praiſes unto our God*, (ſays one, whoſe Experience, in this Caſe, we may rely upon) *for it is pleaſant, and Praiſe is comely.* Petition and Confeſſion are the Language of the Indigent and the Guilty, the Breathings of a ſad and a contrite Spirit: *Is any afflicted? Let him pray:* But

Pſ. cxlvii. 1.

Jam. v. 13.

is any merry? Let him ſing Pſalms. The moſt uſual and natural way of Men's expreſſing the Mirth of their Hearts, is, in a Song; and Songs are the very Language of Praiſe; to the expreſſing of which they are in a peculiar manner appropriated, and are ſcarce of any other Uſe in Religion. Indeed, the whole Compoſition of this Duty is ſuch, as throughout ſpeaks Eaſe and Delight to the Mind: It proceeds from *Love*, and from *Thankfulneſs*; from *Love*, the Fountain of Pleaſure, the Paſſion, which gives every thing we do, or enjoy, its reliſh and Agreeableneſs. From *Thankfulneſs*, which involves in it the Memory of paſt Benefits; the actual Preſence of them to the Mind, and the repeated Enjoyment of them. And as its *Principle* is, ſuch is its *End* alſo. For it procures Quiet and Eaſe to the Mind, by doing ſomewhat towards ſatisfying that Debt which it labours under; by delivering it of thoſe Thoughts of Praiſe and Gratitude, thoſe Exultations it is ſo full of; and which would grow uneaſy and

SERM. I.

SERM. I. troubleſome to it, if they were kept in. If the Thankful *refrained*, it would be *Pain and Grief to them*: But then, *then is their Soul ſatisfied as with Marrow and Fatneſs, when their Mouth praiſeth God with joyful Lips.*

Pſ. lxiii. 5.

2. It is another diſtinguiſhing Property of Divine Praiſe, that it enlargeth the Powers and Capacities of our Souls; turning them from little and low Things, upon their Greateſt and Nobleſt Objects, the Divine Nature; and employing them in the Diſcovery and Admiration of thoſe ſeveral Perfections that adorn it. We ſee, what Difference there is between Man and Man; ſuch, as there is hardly greater between Man and Beaſt: And this proceeds chiefly from the different Sphere of Thought which they act in, and the different Objects they converſe with. The Mind is eſſentially the ſame in the Peaſant and the Prince; the Forces of it naturally equal in the untaught Man, and the Philoſopher: Only the One of theſe is buſied in mean Affairs, and within nar-

rower

ſower Bounds, the Other exerciſes him- SERM.
ſelf in things of Weight and Moment; I.
and This it is that puts the wide Diſtance
between them. Noble Objects are to
the Mind, what the Sun-Beams are to
a Bud or Flower: They open and un-
fold, as it were, the Leaves of it; put
it upon exerting and ſpreading itſelf
every way; and call forth all thoſe
Powers, that lie hid and locked up in
it. The Praiſe and Admiration of God,
therefore, brings this Advantage along
with it, that it ſets our Faculties upon
their full Stretch, and improves them to
all the Degrees of Perfection, of which
they are capable.

3. It farther promotes in us an ex-
quiſite Senſe of God's Honour, and an
high Indignation of Mind at every
thing that openly profanes it. For what
we value and delight in, we cannot, with
Patience, hear ſlighted, or abuſed. Our
Own Praiſes, which we are conſtantly
putting up, will be a *Spur* to us toward
procuring and promoting the Divine
Glory in every Other Inſtance; and will

SERM. I. make us ſet our Faces againſt all open and avowed Impieties. Which, methinks, ſhould be conſidered a little by ſuch as would be thought not to be wanting in this Duty, and yet are often ſilent under the fouleſt Diſhonours done to Religion, and its great Author. For tamely to hear God's Name and Worſhip vilified by Others, is no very good Argument, that we have been uſed to Honour and Reverence him in good earneſt, Ourſelves.

4. It will, beyond all this, work in us a deep Humility, and Conſciouſneſs of our own Imperfections. Upon a frequent Attention to God and his Attributes, we ſhall eaſily diſcover our own Weakneſs and Emptineſs; Our ſwelling Thoughts of ourſelves will abate, and we ſhall ſee and feel, that we are *altogether lighter to be laid in the Balance, than Vanity.* And this is a Leſſon, which, to the greateſt Part of Mankind, is, I think, very well worth learning. We are naturally Preſumptuous and Vain, full of Ourſelves, and regardleſs

Pſal. lxi.

of

of every thing beſides: Eſpecially, when ſome little Outward Privileges diſtinguiſh Us from the reſt of Mankind; then, 'tis odd, but we look into Ourſelves with great degrees of Complacency; and are *wiſer* (and better every way) *in our own Conceit*, than *ſeven Men, that can render a Reaſon.* Now nothing will contribute ſo much to the Cure of this Vanity, as a due Attention to God's Excellencies, and Perfections: By comparing Theſe with Thoſe which, we imagine, belong to us, we ſhall learn, *not to think of ourſelves more highly than we ought to think of ourſelves, but to think ſoberly:* We ſhall find more Satisfaction in looking upwards, and humbling ourſelves before our common Creator, than in caſting our Eyes downwards with Scorn upon our Fellow Creatures, and ſetting at nought any Part of the Work of his Hands. The vaſt Diſtance we are at from Real and Infinite Worth will aſtoniſh us ſo much, that we ſhall not be tempted to value Ourſelves upon thoſe

SERM. I.

Prov. xxvi. 16.

Rom. xii. 3.

leſſer

SERM. I. leſſer Degrees of Pre-eminence, which Cuſtom, or Opinion, or ſome little accidental Advantages have given Us over other Men.

5. I ſhall mention but one Uſe of it more, and 'tis This; That a conſcientious Praiſe of God will keep Us back from all falſe and mean Praiſes, all fulſome and ſervile Flatteries, ſuch as are in Uſe among Men. Praiſing, as 'tis commonly managed, is nothing elſe but a Trial of Skill upon a Man, how many good Things we can poſſibly ſay of him. All the Treaſuries of Oratory are ranſacked, all the fine things that ever were ſaid, are heaped together, for his ſake; and no matter, whether it belongs to him, or not; ſo there be but enough on't. Which is one deplorable Inſtance, among a thouſand of the Baſeneſs of human Nature, its ſmall Regard to Truth and Juſtice; to Right, or Wrong; to what is, or is not to be praiſed. But he, who hath a deep Senſe of the Excellencies of God upon his Heart, will make a God of nothing beſides.

beſides. He will give every One his juſt Encomium, Honour where Honour is due, and as much as is due; becauſe it is his Duty to do ſo: But the Honour of God will ſuffer him to go no farther. Which Rule, if it had been obſerved, a Neighbouring Prince, (who now, God be thanked, needs Flattery ſomewhat more than ever he did) would have wanted a great deal of that Incenſe, which hath been offered up to him by his Adorers. SERM. I.

Upon theſe Grounds doth the Duty of Praiſe ſtand; and theſe are the Obligations that bind us to the Performance of it. 'Tis the End of our Being, and the very Rule and Law of Our Nature; flowing from the Two great Fountains of human Action, the Underſtanding and the Will, naturally, and almoſt neceſſarily. It is the moſt Excellent Part of our Religious Worſhip; enduring to Eternity, after the reſt ſhall be *done away*; and paid even Now, in the frankeſt Manner, with the leaſt Regard to our own Intereſt. It recommends

SERM. I.

mends itſelf to us by ſeveral peculiar Properties and Advantages; as it carries more Pleaſure in it, than all other Kinds of Devotion; as it enlarges and exalts the ſeveral Powers of the Mind; as it breeds in us an exquiſite Senſe of God's Honour, and a Willingneſs to promote it in the World; as it teaches us to be Humble and Lowly Ourſelves; and yet preſerves us from baſe and ſordid Flattery, from beſtowing mean and undue Praiſes upon Others.

IV. I ſhall now ſhut up the arguing Part of this Diſcourſe, with a ſhort Application to Two Sorts of Perſons; the *Careleſs*, and the *Profane*; One of which Neglects the Practice of ſo Important a Duty, the Other lives in an open Defiance of it.

A *Neglect*, in this Caſe, doth certainly involve in it a very high Degree of Guilt and Folly: For 'tis (we ſee) the Neglect of our Duty, and Honour, our Intereſt, and our Pleaſure, all at once. 'Tis to omit doing that, which we were purpoſely

poſely ſent into the World to do; and without doing which, all the other Affairs of Life are but one continued Impertinence: That, which we have ſo many Obligations to do, and no Excuſe for leaving undone; ſince Praiſe is within every Man's Reach; there is no one but hath it in his Power to be thankful.

God commanded the *Jews* to acknowledge his Sovereignty and Beneficence, by Sacrifices; a Coſtly and a Troubleſome Way of Worſhip. Of Us he requires only the Cheap and Eaſy offering of Our Thanks and Praiſes,—and ſhall we not pay it? Alas! We do not! Every thing proves an Hindrance to us in the Way to this our bounden Duty and Service: We are too idle, or too buſy to attend upon it. And even when we find Leiſure enough; yet how cold and how inſenſible are we, whilſt 'tis going forward! *We draw nigh unto him with our Mouths, and honour him with our Lips* (perhaps); *but our Hearts are far from him.* And do we then know, what it is to praiſe God becomingly? Do we remember, how

Mat. xv. 8.

SERM. I. how the great Teacher of Thankſgiving ſummons up every One of his Faculties to aſſiſt him in it? *Bleſs the Lord, O my Soul! and all that is within me, bleſs his holy Name!* 'Tis a Work that will employ *all that is within us*, will call for all the Application, and Vigour, and Warmth, that we can poſſibly beſtow upon it. Cold and languid Praiſe, is no Praiſe; this Sacrifice can be no longer acceptable than 'tis burning.

Pſ. ciii. 1.

To thoſe Men, who live in the *Contempt* of this Duty, we have alſo ſomewhat to ſay, if they would but hear us. They are generally ſuch, as pretend a high Senſe of the Dignity of Human Nature, and bear no ſmall Reſpect to their own Underſtandings. Now, tho' other Parts of Religious Worſhip ſhould happen to be too mean and low for ſuch great Minds to take up with; yet This, methinks, might deſerve to be thought Equal to them. Let Confeſſion and Prayer go only for the Arts of Whining and Begging, and be as much beneath them as they imagine; yet ſurely, Praiſe

Praiſe hath ſomewhat in it ſo great, and ſo noble, as may invite them to practiſe it. 'Tis a Subject, fit for the moſt enlarged Capacities to dwell on; and ſuch an one, as even Thoſe would certainly find themſelves raiſed and improved by.

SERM. I.

If it were poſſible for Theſe Men to have a Reliſh of any thing in this Kind, we would deſire them to make the Trial; to take the Hymn, called *Te Deum*, into their Hands, and to read it attentively; and then tell us truly, whether they did not find their Minds filled, and their Affections ſtrangely raiſed by the Images which there occurred to them; Whether they did not perceive themſelves to be ſomewhat above themſelves, whilſt they were peruſing it. And theſe Effects, of which every Man, who joins in that Hymn, muſt be ſenſible, are owing to that Majeſtick Plainneſs and Simplicity [illegible] which goes through it, [illegible] by Words, Unenlivened by Figures! 'Tis the Matter alone which ſupports the Expreſſion: And becauſe the

SERM. I. the Matter therein contained, is, the Excellencies of the Divine Nature, the pure and genuine Objects of Praiſe; therefore is the Hymn itſelf ſo lofty and moving.

But, alas! We ſpeak in vain! The Men, who are bold enough to ſlight a Duty of this Rank and Character, will eaſily ſlight every thing than can be offered to bring them to it. All we can ſay to them is, that, as God made them for his Glory, ſo he will certainly ſerve the Ends of that Glory upon them, one way or another. And therefore, if they will not freely praiſe him for his Goodneſs in this World, they ſhall ſurely, whether they will or no, contribute to the Praiſe of his Juſtice in the next.

V. Thus have I attempted to Deſcribe this Duty, to ſet out the great *Reaſonableneſs*, and to ſtir You up to the *Practice* of it. And certainly, it was never more reaſonable, than on This Occaſion, when we commemorate ſuch

Pa

Paſt, and feel ſuch Preſent Mercies. The Reſtoration of the Monarchy, and of all thoſe Bleſſings in Church and State that came back with it; the Re-eſtabliſhment of the *Beauty of Praiſe* in our Sanctuary; the Return of Peace and Plenty, of Learning, and all the Arts of Civil Life; the Reducing us from Confuſion and Rage, into Order and Friendlineſs, and making Us a Nation at Unity in itſelf; Lovely at home, and Terrible abroad. Theſe were ſuch ſound and ſubſtantial Bleſſings as will wear well; and though done a great while ago, will yet deſerve a great while hence a Place in our Kalendars. Neither Love to our Country, nor the Honour we bear to Thoſe who rule over Us; neither Our Gratitude to God, nor our Good-will towards Men, will ſuffer ſuch Wonders of Providence to ſlip out of our Minds; or the Day in which they were brought about, eaſily to grow Old upon Us. SERM. I.

SERM. I. The Benefits, we then received, were indeed exceeding great, and would juſtly claim a larger Share in our preſent Reflexions, had not the Goodneſs of God taken off our Thoughts a little from that Subject, by calling us to the Acknowledgment of New Loving Kindneſſes: For behold, what glorious Things the Lord hath again wrought for Us! Bleſſing their Majeſties Forces with a great and ſignal Victory over the moſt haughty and inſolent of Enemies: A Victory ſo Early, ſo Complete, and ſo Cheaply purchaſed, that we have ſome Reaſon to hope, it may fix the Fortune of the War, and put an End to the Deſtructions of the Deſtroyer, to whom we truſt, God hath now ſaid, as to the Sea itſelf, ——*Hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no farther; and here ſhall thy proud Waves be ſtayed.*

Job xxxviii. 11.

Bleſſed be God, who did not utterly caſt out our Prayers, and our Supplications; but delayed only to anſwer them, till a *Day of Salvation*, till an *acceptable Time*, when the Mercy would be

nearer to Us, and his Goodneſs more remarkably ſeen in beſtowing it! when we were alarmed with Invaſions from Abroad, and Conſpiracies at Home; when Men threatened to *ſwallow us up quick*; when Succeſs was now ſo requiſite to preſerve the Honour of the Nation, to ſupport their Majeſties Throne, and to ſtrengthen the Hands of their Allies: Then did He appear and our own Cauſe; Then was the God of Hoſts our Strength, and our Shield. Surely, *There is no End of that Goodneſs*, which continues thus to purſue us; which vouchſafes to eſtabliſh to Us, and to our Poſterity, thoſe Bleſſings, under which we have been ſo unthankful, and ſo ingrateful already! and to give us freſh Opportunities of Praiſe, which I hope we ſhall make a better Uſe of!

SERM. I.

Let us, therefore, *Offer unto God Thankſgiving*; and not That only, but *Ourſelves* alſo, *our Souls and Bodies, to be a Reaſonable, Holy, and Lively Sacrifice*: Let us render him the Fruit of

SERM. I. our Lips, and the Obedience of our Lives, that these Blessings may not prove a Curse to us; but that He may still be our God, and We may be his People.

To Him, with the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour, Praise and Glory, henceforth, and for evermore! Amen.

The

The POWER *of Charity to Cover Sin.*

A

SERMON

Preached before the

Preſident *and* Governors

Of the HOSPITALS of

Bridewell and *Bethlehem*,

IN

BRIDEWELL-CHAPEL,

Auguſt 16, 1694.

1 *St.* PETER iv. 8.

Charity ſhall Cover the Multitude of Sins.

GOD be thanked, the frequent Returns of ſuch Pious Meetings as theſe, in this Rich and Charitable CITY, have

SERM. II.

SERM. II. have made the general Argument of CHARITY, the Nature and chief Properties, the ſeveral Grounds and Reaſons of this Duty ſo well underſtood, that, to Entertain you with a Diſcourſe at large on that Subject, would be a very needleſs and uſeleſs Attempt. So many Eminent Pens have gone before, in this Way, as have left it very difficult for thoſe who come after, either to ſay any thing which They *have not* ſaid, or not to ſay That much worſe, which They *have*.

Upon this Account, and becauſe, indeed, I take General Diſcourſes for the moſt Part, to be like Large Proſpects, where the Eye is loſt by the wide Compaſs it takes, and ſees ſo many things at once, that it ſees nothing diſtinctly; I have choſen at preſent to point Your Thoughts only on One particular Property of this Great Virtue, which hath been not often handled, I think; and even Then, not always well underſtood: It is That, which the Apoſtle St. *Peter* propoſeth to Us, in thoſe few Words I have

have read to You,——*Charity ſhall cover the Multitude of Sins.* SERM. II.

Few as they are, they will ſufficiently employ our Thoughts at this time, if we conſider, in the

Firſt Place. The ſeveral Explications that have been given of them, and ſatisfy ourſelves which of Theſe ought to take Place. If, I.

Secondly, We free That One True Genuine Meaning of the Words from the Exceptions which lie againſt it. If, II.

Thirdly, We eſtabliſh the Truth laid down upon its proper Grounds and Reaſons. And if, III.

Fourthly, We make ſome few uſeful Deductions from it. IV.

After this is done, the little Time that is left, will properly be ſpent in applying what hath been ſaid more immediately to the Occaſion of this preſent Aſſembly. V.

SERM. II. I.

Charity ſhall Cover the Multitude of Sins.

There is ſcarce any Man, I believe, who hears theſe Words, that is not ready to frame to himſelf this Senſe of them; "That the Virtue of *Charity* "is of ſo great Price in the Sight of "God, that Thoſe Perſons, who poſſeſs "and exerciſe it in any Eminent man-"ner, are peculiarly Entitled to the "Divine Favour and Pardon, with re-"gard to numberleſs Slips and Failings "in their Duty, which they may be "otherwiſe guilty of: This Great Chri-"ſtian Perfection, of which they are "Maſters, ſhall make many Little Im-"perfections to be overlooked and un-"obſerved; it ſhall *Cover the Multitude* "*of Sins.*"

This, I ſay, is the account, which every Man naturally gives himſelf of theſe Words, at his firſt hearing them; and it is for That very Reaſon probably, that That is the True and Genuine Account of them. For, ſuppoſing the Original

Original Text to be well and clearly rendered in our Verſion, it will, I am of Opinion, be found, that That Senſe of any Paſſage, which, after attending to the Force of the Words, and to their Coherence with what goes before, and what follows, Firſt occurs to the Mind, is generally the Juſteſt and Trueſt. SERM. II.

This hath not however been always thought a good Rule in the preſent Caſe. For ſeveral Pious, and ſome Judicious Men, finding the Words, in their plain and familiar Meaning, to carry ſomewhat of a ſuſpicious Sound with them, and to border a little (as They thought) on the Papal Doctrine of *Works Meritorious*, have, therefore, taken ſome Pains to give a Different Interpretation of them. I ſhall offer, firſt, to your View ſome of theſe miſtaken Senſes, ere I come to conſider that which, I think, was intended by St. *Peter*; becauſe Each of theſe doth certainly propoſe a Clear and Appoſite Truth to us, tho' perhaps not truly drawn from the Paſſage now before us.

Firſt,

SERM. II.

Firſt, then, the Words have been underſtood to contain an Account of that particular Inſtance of Charity, which we call *Good-Nature*: by which we paſs by little Slights and Injuries, interpret Things in the beſt Senſe, are not apt to take, or return an Affront, not forward to publiſh, or believe an ill Report of any One: by which we turn our Eyes always towards the beſt Side of a Man, and chuſe rather to look on his Virtues than his Failures; and by which we conſtantly interpoſe our good Offices, whereever we think they may be ſerviceable, either to the compoſing Old Differences, or preventing New ones.

And This Senſe is grounded upon a ſuppoſed Relation there is between Theſe Words in St. *Peter*, and Thoſe in the *Proverbs*; *Hate ſtirreth up Strifes, but Love covereth all Sins.* Now, though indeed, in *Our Tranſlation*, there is ſome Similitude between the Words of the Text, and this Paſſage in the *Proverbs*; yet, as it lies in the *Septuagint-Verſion* (which

(which the Apoſtles made uſe of) it bears no ſuch Reſemblance to the Text as may make it probable that the One ought to be Expounded by the Other. On the contrary, it deſerves Obſervation, that, where-ever the *Greek* Phraſe *, which is here tranſlated by *Covering Sin*, occurs in Scripture, it conſtantly ſignifies that Pardon of Sin which proceeds from *God*, not any Inſtances of Good Nature and Forgiveneſs exerciſed by *Men*. SERM. 11.

See Pſalm lxxxiv. 1. xxxii. 1. *and* Neh. iv. 5.

We may farther obſerve, that This Senſe of the Words is by no means full enough to bear the Weight of that emphatic and ſolemn Preface with which the Apoſtle introduces them: *but above all things* (ſays He, in the Words immediately before the Text) *have fervent Charity among yourſelves: for Charity ſhall Cover the Multitude of Sins.* Ἐκτενῆ ἀγάπλω, intenſe, or fervent Charity muſt ſignify ſomewhat more than the bare Acts and Offices of *Good-Nature*. If they, to

* Κτλύπλειν ἁμαρτίας.

whom

SERM. II. whom the Apoſtle wrote, were *above all things* to have *fervent Charity* among themſelves, it could not be for This Reaſon, becauſe Charity would render them inoffenſive towards Others, and not eaſy to be offended Themſelves. For though This be a commendable Degree of Virtue, and very fit to be enjoined, becauſe not frequently practiſed; yet can it not deſerve that peculiar Emphaſis and Streſs which is here laid upon it. Eſpecially, if we conſider it as ſucceeding the mention of thoſe more important and neceſſary Duties, to which the Apoſtle exhorts them in the preceding Verſe, the *being ſober, and watching unto Prayer: Above* all which, it cannot be ſuppoſed, that the Duty of converſing with one another according to the Rules of *Good-Nature* and *Gentleneſs* ſhould be enjoined.

The Words, therefore, have, in the *Second* Place, been thus alſo interpreted, *Charity ſhall cover the Multitude of Sins*; that is, ſays the excellent *Grotius*, it will have a mighty Influence towards reclaiming

ing Sinners from the Error of their Ways; the Conſequence of which is, That the Sins of Men thus reclaimed, are pardoned, or covered. Charity, which is an exalted Love of God and our Neighbour, will make us induſtrious in procuring Glory to the One, by the Salvation of the Other. It will create a mighty Zeal for the Intereſts of Virtue, and the Honour of the Goſpel, and the Good of Souls; and it will run through all the Difficulties that lie in the way towards ſo good an End, with Readineſs and Pleaſure. It will not be frightened from making Attempts even on Thoſe of the firſt Rank in Wickedneſs, the Worſt and moſt Hardened of Men; becauſe it knows, that *Their* Revolt from Sin to Virtue (if it can be compaſſed) will be of mighty Conſequence to Religion, and will probably draw whole Troops of Common Sinners along with it: The Senſe they have of their Own Sins being covered, will make *Them* alſo eager in their turn to cover thoſe of Other Men.

SERM. II.

This

SERM. II.

This is a very Good and Pious Senſe of the Words, but (I believe, it will be allowed me) no very Eaſy and Natural One: they muſt be racked ere they can be brought to confeſs This Meaning. However it was what that Learned Perſon was led into by a former Explication he had made of a parallel Place in St. *James*; which I ſhall crave leave to produce at length, and to comment upon, becauſe I take it to be the *Key* of the Text, which eaſily and readily lets us into the True Senſe of it. *Brethren* (ſays St. *James*, at the Concluſion of his Epiſtle) *if any One of You do Err from the Truth, and One Convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins.* He intended to ſhut up the Epiſtle with recommending to them one of the moſt important and uſeful Virtues, That of endeavouring the Converſion and Reformation of Men. And he intended alſo to ſtir them up to the Exerciſe of this Virtue

James v. 19, 20.

tue by the moſt powerful Motives he could propoſe: What are they? Why firſt, That *He who converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Ways*, ſhould conſider, that he *ſaveth a Soul from Death*; and then, ſecondly, and chiefly, That he *ſhall* [alſo] *cover a Multitude of Sins.* Whoſe Sins? Thoſe of the Converted Perſon. Nay, but that was already ſaid, and much more than that in the foregoing Motive, *He ſhall ſave a Soul from Death:* for ſurely the ſaving a Soul from Death, neceſſarily includes and preſuppoſes the Remiſſion of its Sins. It muſt then be meant of His Sins who makes, and not of His who becomes, the Convert: And Thus indeed this Laſt Clauſe carries a New Motive in it, diſtinct from that in the Former; and ſuch an One as riſeth beyond it, and more ſenſibly touches thoſe to whom it is addreſſed; and was therefore fit to be propoſed in the Laſt place, and to be left, as a Sting in their Minds. 'Tis as if St. *James* had ſaid more at length, "Let ſuch an one know, that he ſhall, SERM. II.

"by

SERM. II.

" by this Means, not *only* ſave a Soul " from Death (though This itſelf be a " very Great and Deſireable Thing) but " ſhall *alſo* (which more nearly concerns " him) ſecure to himſelf on this Account " the Pardon of many Sins."

Now the Words of St. *James* here explained, are exactly the ſame with thoſe of St. *Peter*, in my Text; and the Occaſion upon which they are introduced, and their Dependence on the Context, is much the ſame in both Places; except only that they are uſed in my Text, as a Motive to Charity in general; but in St. *James*, with Regard only to One main and eminent Branch of it, the Converſion of Souls: What therefore St. *James* means by them, is meant alſo by St. *Peter*: And, conſequently, that moſt Obvious and Eaſy Senſe, which I mentioned at the Entrance of this Diſcourſe, is, in all Probability, the Trueſt: And, as ſuch, I ſhall take the Liberty here once again to repeat it. It is This; " That the Virtue of Charity is of ſo " great Price in the Sight of God, that " They,

" They, who poſſeſs and exerciſe it in any Eminent Manner, are peculiarly entitled to the Divine Favour and Pardon, with regard to numberleſs Slips and Failings in their Duty, which they may be Otherwiſe guilty of. This great Chriſtian Perfection, of which they are Maſters, ſhall make many little Imperfections to be over-looked and unobſerved; It *ſhall Cover the Multitude of Sins.*

SERM. II.

Nor are there wanting parallel Places in other Parts of Holy Writ, which confirm this Interpretation of the Words, and the Doctrine contained in it. For beſides thoſe Paſſages in the Apocryphal Writers, which directly affirm, that *Alms ſhall purge away Sin*, and that, *As Water quencheth Flaming Fire, ſo Alms maketh an Atonement for Sins*; there are in the Books of *Proverbs*, and *Daniel*, two Texts, very expreſs to this Purpoſe: In the firſt of theſe, the *Wiſe Man* declares, that *by Mercy and Truth Iniquity is purged*; and in the Latter the Prophet counſels *Nebuchadnezzar*, to *break off his Sins*

Tob. xii. 9. Eccluſ. iii. 30. Prov. xvi. 6. Dan. iv. 27.

SERM. II. *Sins by Righteouſneſs*, (or rather, as it is in all the Ancient Verſions, to redeem his Sins by Alms-deeds) *and his Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor.* And were it proper in this Place to vouch the Teſtimony of the Earlieſt Writers of the Church, it were eaſy to produce, from their Works, Paſſages without Number, wherein they ſpeak the ſame Language.

I fear I have been tedious in ſettling the *Senſe of the Words:* but it is no more than was requiſite, in ſo important a Point, ſo little inſiſted on from the Pulpit: and which may be thought liable to ſome Juſt *Exceptions.*

II. *Theſe* I am now, in the *Second Place*, to propoſe, and ſhall endeavour to remove. The doing of which will give me an Occaſion of clearing the Senſe, and limiting the Bounds of this Truth, more exactly and fully.

The *Firſt* and great Exception againſt This way of Expounding the Text is, that it gives too great a Colour to the Popiſh

Popiſh Doctrines of *Merit* and *Supererogation*; and ſeems to leſſen the Worth of the only True and Proper Satisfaction for Sin, made by our Saviour on the Croſs. For, at this Rate, what need of Remiſſion of Sin in every Caſe by the Blood of Chriſt, ſince We ourſelves are in Good Meaſure capable of making the Atonement? We who have it, it ſeems, in our Power, by the Exerciſe of one Particular Virtue, to ſecure a Pardon to ourſelves for neglecting all the reſt; and can blot out the Remembrance of an Ill-ſpent Life, by a few Acts of Charity at the Cloſe of it? As if God were ſo much beholden to us for our Good Deeds, as to be bound for their Sakes, to forgive us our Ill Ones! Or, as if the Performance of our Duty in One Caſe, could make any manner of Amends to him for our Non-performance of it in another! This, ſay They, is very Eaſy and Comfortable Divinity! SERM. II.

To take off the Force of this Objection, it will be requiſite to reflect a lit-

SERM. II. tle on theſe following Conſiderations. And,

1ſt, We muſt Explain ourſelves a little more particularly, What is to be underſtood by that *Charity*, to which the Promiſe of the Text is made; What it is in the *Nature* and *Extent*, and what in the *Intention* and *Degree* of it.

As to its *Nature* and *Extent*, it muſt be underſtood to ſignify not barely *Acts of Relief* to the Poor and Needy, as the Vulgar and Confined Uſe of the Word imports; but, more largely, all the ſeveral Ways of *Univerſal Beneficence* and *Kindneſs*, by which one Man can be ſerviceable to another. Farther, it expreſſes not the *Outward Material Act* only, but muſt be ſuppoſed to take in alſo the *Vital Form* of it, that *Inward Principle* of a *Sincere Love* towards *God* and *Man*, from whence it regularly flows; and ſeparated from which, the meer external Act is a Lifeleſs and Uſeleſs Performance. And Then, even of Charity thus Largely underſtood, it is *not a common Degree* that is meant here; 'Tis to an Intenſe or Fer-

Fervent Charity, to a mighty and extra- SERM.
ordinary Meaſure of it, that this mighty II.
and extraordinary Bleſſing is expreſly ſaid
to belong.

2*dly*, Even of this Exalted Degree of Charity, it is not ſaid, *that it ſhall cover all manner of Tranſgreſſions*, how Groſs and Heinous ſoever; The Words of the Text do by no means carry us to aſſert thus much concerning it: but only (as you have heard them Explained to You) ſeem to ſay, that it ſhall be our Excuſe for many leſſer Neglects and Failings in our Duty, many Sins of Infirmity, Surpriſe, and Daily Incurſion; which are properly enough ſtiled *the Multitude of Sins*: It *ſhall Cover* ſuch Offences only, as are conſiſtent with a State of True *Charity*; and ſurely Thoſe cannot be very Groſs and Preſumptuous. For He, who lives in the Perfect Exerciſe of that Fervent *Charity*, which the Text recommends, abounding Inwardly and Outwardly in all the various Inſtances and Expreſſions of it, and in thoſe ſeveral Virtues and Graces which

SERM. II.

do naturally attend it: I ſay, whoever he is, that is thoroughly poſſeſt and acted by this Divine Principle of *Love*, cannot be ſuppoſed capable of committing any Heinous Sins, *whilſt* he is under the Guidance of it: And as for Thoſe which he had fallen into before the Attainment of this Gift, They were certainly remitted alſo and covered *before* the Attainment of it; elſe, doubtleſs, he had never attained it. So that no Great Guilt of any Kind can well be thought to harbour in that Breaſt, where true Charity dwells.

Indeed, it is not univerſally certain, that, whenever God remits the *Guilt* of Sin, he remits the Puniſhment too (the *Temporal Puniſhment*, I mean) for Wicked Men, upon their Return to Virtue, do not ſeldom find, to their Coſt, that a Sin may be pardoned, and yet all the Ill Conſequences of it not prevented; and they can, therefore, often trace the Steps of their former Miſdoings, in the ſeveral Evils of Life that afterwards befal them. And in This Senſe, therefore,

it

it may be, and is probably true, that Charity ſhall cover many Sins, even of the firſt Magnitude; *i. e.* it ſhall prevent the Temporal Inflictions due to them, and often, even after Pardon obtained, purſuing the Committers of them: But it contributes to a Removal of the *Guilt* only of ſuch Frailties and Infirmities of a leſſer Size, as may be thought conſiſtent with a State of Charity. And therefore, to except againſt the Doctrine laid down, as encouraging the Charitable Man to expect Remiſſion of all Manner of Sins, how great and how numerous ſoever, is to load it with a Difficulty which doth no ways belong to it. But, SERM. II.

3*dly*, Even as to theſe ſlighter Omiſſions and Failings, it is not pretended, that they are covered by Acts of Mercy and Charity in any Senſe, but what includes the Application of the Merits of our Saviour's Blood, the only Fountain of Satisfaction for all Kind of Sins, for the Leaſt as well as the Greateſt. It is true indeed, and granted, that the

SERM. II. Blood of Chriſt alone can expiate Sin. However, this hinders not but that God may make ſuch and ſuch Acts of Ours the *Conditions* and Ground (as it were) of applying the Virtue of that Blood to us. And thus Our Good Works, though they are not the *meritorious*, yet may become, if I may ſo ſpeak, the *occaſional*, Cauſe of Pardon and Grace to us. And if This be eſtabliſhing the Popiſh Doctrine of Salvation by Works, then hath our Saviour Himſelf, I fear, eſtabliſhed it, in that Divine Form of Prayer, in which he hath taught us to ſay, *Forgive Us Our Treſpaſſes, as We forgive Thoſe that Treſpaſs againſt Us.* *As* We forgive Thoſe! i. e. *Inaſmuch as*, on that very Account (among Others) *becauſe*, we forgive Thoſe that treſpaſs againſt Us. Where, we ſee, the Exerciſe of one great Inſtance of Charity, Forgiveneſs of Enemies, is made the Ground of our aſking and expecting Forgiveneſs from God.

4*thly* and *Laſtly*, It follows not, that becauſe ſo Vaſt a Recompence is promiſed

to

to a Fervent Charity, therefore the Exerciſe of it is in the Way of *Supererogation*, ſo that we might have let it alone without Fault or Blame. We may be ſtrictly, and by the very Letter of the Law, obliged to it; and yet it may include ſo high a Pitch of Perfection, and one ſo ſeldom attained, that God may think fit, wherever it is attained, mightily to reward it; and to encourage us towards doing our Duty in ſome One Great Point, by an Aſſurance, that in many ſmaller Inſtances he will not be *Extreme to mark what is done amiſs* by us. Our Gracious Maſter deals with us in This Caſe, as a Man oftentimes doth with his Servant; if he be Truſty and Faithful to him in a Buſineſs of Great Concern and Moment, though his Duty bound him to be ſo, yet ſhall that Piece of Eminent Service excuſe many Neglects and Failings upon Other Occaſions. SERM. II.

There is yet a *Second Objection*, though indeed ſo ſlight an One, as, after the Former hath been removed, is ſcarce worth mentioning. It is taken from that Say-

ing

SERM. II.

ing of our Lord, That They *will* Love much, to whom much *hath been* forgiven. Contrary to which, the Text, as here expounded, ſeems to affirm, that They who *do* love much, *ſhall* have much Forgiven them. But theſe Two Truths are eaſily reconciled: For it is not hard to underſtand, how That, which is the *Cauſe* of a thing in One Reſpect, may be the *Effect* of it in another. And accordingly, it may be very true, that He, who is Forgiven much, will, for that very Reaſon, Love much: And it may be as True, that He, who thus Loveth much, becauſe much hath been Forgiven him, ſhall, on that very Account, have much more forgiven him. 'Tis juſt the ſame Caſe as between Me and my Friend: I may paſſionately love him, becauſe he hath pardoned me the Great and many Injuries I formerly did him, while we were at Variance: And again, the Knowledge he hath of my Love, may incline him to paſs over any Future Miſtakes and Miſcarriages, whereby I may happen to offend him.

The

SERM. II.

The Doctrine being thus fixed, and freed from Exception; I go on, as I propoſed, in the *Third* Place, to enquire into the *Grounds and Reaſons* of this Wondrous Efficacy, ſo particularly attributed to the Exerciſe of Charity: For we read not that God hath annexed this Promiſe to any other Grace or Virtue of the Chriſtian Life whatſoever, but to This only, that it *ſhall cover Sin*; of which theſe ſeveral Accounts may, with ſome Probability, be given.

1*ſt*, That it was really more fit and proper that ſuch a Return as this ſhould be made to Charity, than to any other Virtue; becauſe it adjuſts and proportions the Reward of Acting to the Act itſelf; and makes the Duty of Man towards God, and the Bleſſing of God upon the Performance of that Duty, to have a near Relation and Reſemblance to Each other. I explain myſelf in this manner: The Chief Employment, the higheſt Point and Perfection of Charity is, to paſs by the Offences and Injuries of Men; to

SERM. II. to pardon the Malice of our Enemies, and the Ingratitude of our Friends. To Him, therefore, who advances to this Height of Virtue, God hath very *aptly* and *ſuitably* promiſed, that His Faults and Offences too ſhall be pardoned: as He deals with his Neighbour, ſo will God deal with Him: Mercy ſhall be ſhewed upon Him, who ſhews Mercy: If we forgive Other Men their Treſpaſſes, then will our Heavenly Father forgive us our Treſpaſſes alſo. There is, you ſee, a ſtrict Analogy betwixt the Reward annexed, and one Great Inſtance of the Virtue enjoined: which is God's Method of putting us in Mind of what we are to Do, by his Promiſes, as well as his Commands; and of exciting Us to endeavour after a Perfection, not eaſily attained, by aſſuring Us, that the Exerciſe of it ſhall, in the very ſame kind, return doubly and trebly into our Own Boſom. But,

2*dly*, The Good and Charitable Man is peculiarly entitled to the Pardon of many Sins, becauſe he is in a peculiar manner liable to incur the Guilt of many; either

either from the *Natural Frame and Make* SERM.
of his Mind, which diſpoſes him to this II.
Virtue, or from the very *Exerciſe* of the
Virtue itſelf.

Charity is grafted always on Good-Nature, and a Sweetneſs of Diſpoſition: which though it be a Temper of Mind very lovely and deſireable; yet is it ſuch as, in the Circumſtances of our preſent Imperfect State, hath its Inconveniencies; and is what makes Converſation dangerous in a World, where we are ſurrounded with Temptations. It hinders us from arming ourſelves with that obſtinate Reſolution of Mind, that ſtubborn incomplying Virtue, which is requiſite to preſerve a Man undefiled and blameleſs. It makes us eaſy and yielding to Common Cuſtoms, and received Opinions; Ready to comply with a Thouſand things (of which we are not exactly well ſatisfied) upon the pure ſcore of good Nature, and becauſe we cannot allow ourſelves to be troubleſome. And being found and known to be of this Eaſy and Complying Temper; this very thing will

invite

SERM. II. invite Ill Spirits, and Ill Men, to make their Attempts upon us.

And then the * *Exerciſe* of the Virtue itſelf, eſpecially where the Principle of it is ſtrong, lays us open to ſeveral Failings. It makes us omit oftentimes the Duties incumbent on us from our Profeſſions and Callings; and perhaps neglect to take care of Thoſe, whom it is the Firſt Point of Charity to take care of, our Children and Families. It warms us with ſuch a Zeal for doing Good, as breaks out ſometimes into Acts not reconcileable to the Rules of Diſcretion, Decency, and Right Reaſon; and which do real Diſſervice to the Cauſe of God and Religion, inſtead of promoting it. St. *Francis's* Charity went a little too far, when it was taken up in providing for Birds, and Beaſts, after a moſt Extraordinary and Singular manner: the Virtue was not at all beholden to him for being ſhewed in

* Ἀγάπη ζέουσα (τοῦτο δὲ τὸ πάντων αἴτιον τῶν ἀγαθῶν) μυρίων γέγονεν αἴτιον κακῶν, τοῖς μὴ ὀρθῶς χρωμένοις αὐτῇ. Chryſoſt. de Sacerdot. p. 250. Ed. Cant.

ſuch

ſuch a Dreſs, as, inſtead of rendering it deſireable in the Eyes of Men, made it look ridiculous. SERM. II.

Indeed Love (the Spring-Head of Charity) as it is the ſweeteſt of All Paſſions, ſo is one of the ſtrongeſt too; and, if it have the Reins but once given to it, will go near to run away with its Rider: that is, if a due Care be not taken of it, it will exalt our Fancy ſo high, and diſorder it ſo much, as to put it out of the Reach and Rule of the Governing Powers of the Mind. And then, what wild Work doth there follow! Inſtead of Wiſe and Rational Ways of Beneficence, fooliſh Undertakings, and impracticable Deſigns! Inſtead of a manly and ſober Form of Devotion, all the extravagant Ranks and ſilly Freaks of Enthuſiaſm! For the Proof of which I appeal to the Lives of many of thoſe Saints to whom the Church of *Rome* hath allowed a Place in her Kalendar!

Finally, the Charitable Man, who loves every thing, doth not fail ſometimes to love his own Virtue too; I mean, that he

SERM. II. he is apt to over-rate the juſt Price of it, and too much to undervalue every thing elſe in Compariſon of it. A Man may be ſo much ſtruck with the Beauty and Excellence of Charity, as to be leſs concerned than he ought to be for a ſound *Faith*, and make Shipwreck of the One, whilſt he is too haſtily and zealouſly purſuing the Other.

Thus, I ſay, the Good and Merciful Man, being particularly liable to ſome Infirmities, is as particularly comforted with a gracious Aſſurance of their Pardon.

3*dly*, God ſeems on purpoſe to have placed this Mark of Diſtinction upon Charity, to ſhew us, how tender and careful He is of *Our* Welfare; what Bowels of Love and Compaſſion he hath for Us: Since that is His Favourite Virtue, the Virtue he chiefly delights in, and delights to reward; the Exerciſe of which is moſt ſweet and comfortable, moſt uſeful and advantageous to the Sons of Men. He deſigned, by This Convincing Inſtance of his Goodneſs, to prove

to

to us, that he was not an hard and rigorous Master, who enjoined us Commands, for his *Own* ſake, and purely for the Pleaſure of being Obeyed; but that his great Intention was to twiſt our Duty and our Happineſs together: And therefore, the more our Eaſe and Advantage was concerned in the Practice of any Virtue, the ſtronger Ties and Engagements to it was he reſolved to lay upon us. SERM. II.

4*thly*, Charity is particularly available to procure a Remiſſion of the Guilt of Sin, and a Relaxation of the Puniſhment due to it; becauſe it particularly engages in our Behalf the Prayers of all Good Men, and of all Thoſe Perſons to whom the Inſtances of our Goodneſs extend. A Kind and Beneficent Man, as He is a Common Bleſſing to the World, ſo is He bleſſed by all Mankind that know him: All are ready to Implore the Mercies of God, Spiritual and Temporal, upon the Merciful-minded; eſpecially the Poor and Miſerable, (whoſe Prayers God hath, in a particular manner, promiſed to hear) are conſtant and earneſt Interceſſors at the

SERM. II.

Throne of Grace for him. So that, where-as the Poſſeſſors of other Virtues ſtand chiefly upon their own Bottom for the obtaining Pardon and Grace, Every Man almoſt becomes a Supplicant for the Merciful and Liberal: and no wonder, therefore, if ſuch United Requeſts prevail. But,

5thly, and principally, God hath made this Promiſe to *Charity*, and to no Other Virtue, becauſe it is really the Chief and moſt Excellent of Virtues; and the moſt Excellent Thing ought to have the moſt Excellent Reward. It is the great Perfection, the diſtinguiſhing Grace of a Chriſtian, preferable to Faith and Hope, in Dignity, in Uſe, and in the Length of its Duration, as St. *Paul* hath taught us to reaſon concerning it. It is called the *Great Commandment*[a], the *End of the Commandment*[b], and the *Fulfilling of the Law*[c]: and it *is* really what it *is called*. For where this Divine Grace dwells, and reigns, there no Moral Attainment of any kind can be totally wanting. Charity is the

[a] Matth. xxii. 38.
[b] 1 Tim. i. 5.
[c] Rom. xiii. 10.

tle Queen of Virtues*; the reſt are of Her Retinue, and Train as it were; conſtantly attending on Her, appearing, and diſappearing with Her: and well, therefore, as a Queen, is ſhe inveſted by God with that Sovereign Prerogative, the Power of Covering Sin. It is her Nature to be comprehenſive of, and abounding in, many Duties; and, therefore, it is Her Reward alſo, to be a Skreen for many Failings. Charity is ſaid in Scripture to eſtabliſh a True Friendſhip, and to create a Real Likeneſs between God and Man: God paſſeth by the Faults, therefore of the Charitable, as a Friend doth thoſe of his Friend; the Great Reſemblance of the Divine Nature, which ſhines out in him, hides every Leſſer Sort and Degree of Unlikeneſs, and makes it not to be diſcerned. SERM. II.

'Tis difficult to ſtop on ſo fruitful a Subject; and yet more difficult to expreſs one's ſelf becomingly and well. The Tongues of Men and Angels, as they are

* Βασιλὶς τῶν ἀρετῶν. Chryſ. T. VI. p. 193.

SERM. II. said to a worthless Gift, in comparison of Charity, so are they not All able to set out Half the Worth and Excellence of it. St. *Paul* hath done somewhat towards it, in the XIIIth Chapter of the First Epistle to the *Corinthians*; and to Him I refer You.

IV. It remains, that I should make those few *Inferences* I intended from the Whole, and then point out all that hath been said particularly, upon the Occasion of this Present Assembly. And,

1*st*, The Truth, which hath been explained, suggests to Us One Argument against their Opinion, who hold *Justification*, and all the Graces of the Gospel, to be conveyed to us by *Faith alone*; in such a Sense as excludes any manner of Regard to our *Works*. For if Justification be The putting a Man into a State of Favour with God by Remission of Sin, then Works of Charity, which contribute to the Remission of our Sins, must contribute also to our Justification. This Point goes generally for a *Speculative* Nicety,

Nicety, not worth inſiſting upon: But ſurely They, who think it ſo, have not well conſidered, what Influence it hath experimentally had upon *Practice*, and a Good Life, in many of its Aſſertors. Some Spiritual Libertines of the *Antinomian* Way, have by it undermined the very Deſign of the Goſpel; and ſet us free from the Neceſſity of being Pious, Juſt, or Good, upon any other Principle, but that of pure *Gratitude* only. And in Thoſe who do not riſe to theſe mad Heights, yet the Perſuaſions They have entertained about Juſtifying Faith, are obſerved mightily to leſſen their Eſteem of Good Works: and from eſteeming them leſs, to come to practiſe them leſs, is, God knows, a very Eaſy Step, and almoſt, an unavoidable One! Witneſs the celebrated *Inſtitutions* of a great Divine, in which of *Faith* much every where, of *Charity* little any where is ſpoken; and we are not, therefore, to wonder, if the Rules of Charity ſhould, in that Book, be as little obſerved. Indeed theſe very Rules of Charity, (which I would not

SERM. II.

SERM. II. willingly, while I am mentioning, tranſgreſs) induce me to think, That many Learned and Pious Men hold this Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith alone, in its moſt rigid Senſe, without holding, or even diſcerning the Ill Conſequences that attend it. However, ſince the Ill Conſequences of this Doctrine are ſufficiently plain, both from Reaſon and Experience, (though ſuch Men happen not to perceive them) the ſame Rules of Charity forbid us, when the Subject falls in our way, to be ſilent concerning them, or ſuffer Men to think, that thoſe, who exclude good Works from being any ways Inſtrumental towards juſtifying a Sinner, are guilty only of an Innocent Miſtake, which reacheth no farther than bare Speculation. A

2*d* Inference is, That, if a Spirit of Charity ſhall cover a Multitude of Sins, then may we aſſure ourſelves, that the contrary Temper, a Spirit of Hatred, Malignity, and Ill Will, ſhall cover a Multitude of Virtues; *i. e.* They ſhall not be reckoned as Virtues to Him who

poſſeſſeth

ſieth them; Neither God nor Man SERM.
regard them as ſuch, if Charity doth II.
not Crown them. Charity covers many
Sins, becauſe it is ſo noble and ſo excellent a Virtue: What Virtue then, beyond this, can there be found, of Value ſufficient to cover the Sin of Uncharitableneſs?

3*dly*, From the Promiſe made in the Text, We may take an Occaſion to reflect on the wondrous Goodneſs and Condeſcenſion of God. He hath a Right to all the higheſt Inſtances and Degrees of Virtue that is poſſible for us to abound in; and when we have practiſed them to the utmoſt, we have done but what we were ſtrictly obliged to do: And yet ſo far he is pleaſed to abate of this Right, as to accept the Performance of One Great Duty in lieu of the Omiſſion of many Others. An Act of Grace and Kindneſs, which is enhanced to Us, by conſidering, that Reaſon never did, or could make this known to the Heathen World; although the Goſpel hath now revealed it to Us. Nay, remarkable it is,

SERM. II. (as I obſerved to you before) that this Great Duty, which is to compenſate, as it were, for all our Failings, is the moſt pleaſant and delightful Employment that belongs to us; the moſt agreeable to our Nature, and the moſt uſeful to our Fellow-Creatures. Let us not complain, therefore, of the Strictneſs of the Rule we are to walk by, and of the Hardſhips, which in our Chriſtian Warfare we are to undergo. The Rule is ſtrict indeed; but then, as there are Great Helps and Aſſiſtances, enabling us to live up to it; ſo great Abatements and Allowances (we ſee) are made to us at laſt, if we do not. There are indeed Difficulties to be undergone: But, ſurely, the *Labour of Love* is none of them. That, as it makes a kind of Atonement to God for all the Faults we commit, ſo doth it make an Amends to Us for all the Troubles we are at, in every other Part of our Duty; It gives an Eaſineſs to that Yoke, and a Lightneſs to that Burden, which is laid upon us.

4*thly*,

SERM. II.

Thirdly, and *Laſtly*, If the Doctrine laid down be good, then have we in it the plaineſt and moſt quickning Motive in the World to the Exerciſe of this great Duty of Charity; ſuch a Motive, as exceeds the United Force of all the Arguments which ever were offered in this Caſe; and of whoſe Power if a Man can be inſenſible, all Other Motives will, doubtleſs, be loſt upon him. The wiſe Son of *Sirach* thought he had made a reaſonable Plea for Charity, when he ſaid *Lay up Thy Treaſure according to the Commandments of the moſt High, and it ſhall bring thee more Profit than Gold. Shut up Alms in thy Storehouſes and it ſhall deliver Thee from All Affliction; It ſhall fight for Thee againſt Thine Enemies better than a mighty Shield, or a ſtrong Spear.* But how Flat, and Cold, and Unmoving is all this, when compared with the Life and Energy that is in thoſe Few Words;---*It ſhall Cover the Multitude of Sins.*

Ecclus. xxix, 11, 12, 13.

This Motive indeed hath been carried too far, and abuſed to ill Purpoſes by Men

SERM. II. Men of another Communion, who, by the help of it, have made the moſt impure and Profligate Wretches hope for a General Forgiveneſs of all their Sins, ſo They were but Liberal enough to the Church in their Wills; and ſettled ſuch a Revenue upon it, as ſhould make a Good Number of Fathers think it worth their while to ſay Daily *Maſſes* for the Soul of the Departed. And how groſs a way ſoever This is of Expounding the Text, it hath proved a very gainful one to thoſe who made uſe of it; For perhaps half the Wealth of the Church of *Rome* may juſtly be attributed to it. A ſtrong Perſuaſion of the Truth of this Expoſition ſeems to have been one of the chief Foundation-ſtones, upon which a Great Part of her Charitable Buildings have been Erected.

The Miniſters of the Reformed Church indeed, dare not go ſo far in inviting you to Works of Charity and Mercy: But This they dare, and do affirm; That a true Principle of Charity, is that Qualification of Mind, which of all others

is

is moſt grateful and acceptable to God; and ſuch as, at the Day of final Retribution, He will have a particular Regard to, ſo as to make no ſevere Scrutiny into that Man's Faults and Failings, who hath Eminently guided his Life and Practice by it. And this they think ſufficiently intimated in our Saviour's Account of the Proceſs of that Day; where the Only Head of Enquiry he mentions, is what Good and Charitable Deeds we have done to any of our Poor Brethren? Which implies thus much at leaſt; That This will be the Chief Point upon which we ſhall be examined; and that Our Acquittal, as to Neglects in Other Parts of Our Duty, will depend very much upon Our being able to give a good Anſwer to it.

And, I hope this Aſſurance itſelf is a ſufficient Encouragement to the Practice of Charity, without Our needing to ſtrain the Words of the Text to ſo Extravagant a Senſe, as no Wiſe Man can believe that we *ought*, and no good Man would wiſh that we *might*, take them in.

There

SERM. II.

There is indeed one farther Senſe of the Words, than hath yet been mentioned; to which they may, however, be innocently and truly extended. They have been hitherto conſidered only as containing a particular Promiſe to Particular Perſons: They may be underſtood alſo with regard to thoſe Bleſſings which Public Charities procure on Public States and Communities. For it is true alſo, that Acts of Charity ſhall Cover the Sins of Cities and Kingdoms, as well as thoſe of Private Men, if Cities and Kingdoms do generally agree to perform them.

Our Fore-fathers, we may preſume, were of this Opinion; and were powerfully influenced by it, towards ſetting forward thoſe Charitable Deſigns, which are a Laſting Honour and Advantage to this City and Kingdom. They could not but ſee, that the Wealth of the Church, tho' it was really grown too Great, and was by ſome Rich Lazy Orders in it ſcandalouſly employed; yet had been retrenched,

on

on this Account, *beyond* what needed, and had not been applied afterwards to any Religious, or Public Uſe: but was ſquandered away for the moſt part upon Favourites, and upon ſuch as fell in with the Honeſt Zeal of our firſt Reformers, not out of any Principle of Conſcience, but the mere Deſign of enriching Themſelves out of the Plunder of Abbies and Monaſteries. The Senſe of this, doubtleſs, affected deeply the Good and Pious Men of thoſe Times, and made them very Earneſt and Active to procure ſome Part of theſe *Church Spoils* to be ſet aſide for Charitable Uſes: That Retribution, as it were, might by this Means, be made to God, of what had been torn away in too Large Proportions from his Worſhip and Service: To ſpeak plainly,——that by a true Spirit of Charity thoſe Sins might be *Covered*, which a Spirit of Luſt and Avarice, under the Pretence of reforming the Abuſes of Charity, had *cauſed!* SERM. II.

And theſe Endeavours of theirs God bleſſed ſo wonderfully, that ſome Millions

SERM. II. ons of Money were, in a few Years, contributed towards erecting and endowing Here, and in other Parts of our Country, Hoſpitals and Houſes of Charity. This ſufficiently baffled the Calumnies, and ſtopped the Mouths of our Adverſaries of the Church of *Rome*, who cried us down, as Men that were Reforming away Good Works, and turning all Religion into a Notional Faith. How other Proteſtant Countries have freed Themſelves from that Imputation, I am not able to ſay: Sure I am, Ours cleared itſelf ſo well from it, as to turn the Edge of the Objection back upon the Church of *Rome* itſelf. For upon a Fair and Impartial Computation, it appears, that there were Greater Expences upon Publick Works of Charity (ſuch, I mean, as we are at preſent diſcourſing of) in Sixty Years after the Reformation, than had been in Five times that Number of Years, while Popery ſtood: Some have added, —— than there were from the *Conqueſt* down to King *Edward the Sixth*; that Good and Excellent Prince, the Great Promoter

ter and Encourager of theſe Works; and Who is not to be mentioned, without particular Honour, in This Houſe, which acknowledges him for Her Pious and Munificent Founder. SERM. II.

I cannot but obſerve to You, here, that it was the Ruling Part of This Great City, with a good Biſhop of *London*, and Martyr for the Proteſtant Religion, at the Head of them, that by their United Application, ſtirred up that Young Prince to undertake ſo publick-ſpirited a Deſign. And it is natural for me alſo at the ſame Time to wiſh, that That Honourable Body may thus heartily always continue to join Their Endeavours and Intereſt with thoſe of Their *Right Reverend Dioceſan*, in promoting Public Charities, and Public Bleſſings of any kind, either in Church or State.

Indeed, it muſt always be remembered, to the Honour of this Great Body, That, as her Foundations of Charity are larger, for ought I can find, than thoſe of any Other City in the Chriſtian World; ſo they were All raiſed or endowed, either

SERM. II. ther directly by Her own Members; or, if by Other Hands, yet at Her earneſt and importunate Suit: So that the Fabricks, and Revenues of this Kind, that belong to Her, are not only (as in Other Parts) the Uſeful Ornaments of the Place, but ſo many ſtanding Monuments alſo of the Great Piety, and Unparalleled Bounty of Her Anceſtors; who ſolicited the Cauſe of the Poor and the Infirm, the Lame and Wounded, the Vagrant and Lunatick, with ſuch a particular Induſtry and Zeal, as had thoſe Great and Bleſſed Effects, which we at this Day ſee and feel. A Zeal, never to be forgotten by Men! and which we hope, God alſo will never forget! But, when he comes down to Viſit this City for the many Ill Effects of Wealth miſapplied, will, for the ſake of it, Viſit in Mercy; and conſider the *Multitude of her Charities*, as well as That of Her *Sins*; Graciouſly allowing the One to be in ſome meaſure a *Cover* to the Other!

But I have not Room to ſpeak ſeverally of all the Great Benefactions with

which She abounds; and am called upon, SERM.
by the Occaſion of this Preſent Aſſembly, II.
to ſay ſomewhat more particularly of
thoſe of This Place.

I think it, by no means, a fit and decent thing to vie Charities, and to erect the Reputation of One upon the Ruins of another: This is, for the ſake of Charity, to forget the True Character, and Eſſential Properties of it; which are, as St. *Paul* tells us, *to be kind*, and *not to* 1 Cor. xiii.
envy, *not to vaunt itſelf*, or *be puffed up*, 4, 5.
not to behave itſelf unſeemly. However, This, I think, I may ſay, with Modeſty and Truth, to the Advantage of that Charity to which we belong: That though the Bottom of Wealth it ſtands upon, be not ſo Large as that of ſome Others, yet is it in the Deſign of it ſo Comprehenſive and Full, as not any where, I think, to be paralleled.

Here are Supplies to Outward Want and Neceſſity liberally imparted; The Poor and Fatherleſs, not only taken Care of, but ſo bred up, as to be uſeful to the Common-wealth, and perhaps to take

SERM. II. care of many others. Here Idle, and Uſeleſs, (and therefore Neceſſitous) Perſons are taught the Beſt of Leſſons, Labour; inured to it, and made acquainted with it; and then ſent out with ſuch a Stock of Induſtry, as will do them more real Service than any other kind of Benefaction, if They will but make uſe of it, and improve it.

Here, Looſe Men and Women are reduced by wholſome Diſcipline, and Vagrants by Confinement: Puniſhment itſelf is made an Inſtrument of Mercy and Goodneſs, and, as Meat is provided for the Belly, ſo is there *a Rod for the Back of Fools.* Theſe Particular Inſtances of Charity deſerve to be enlarged on: It is an Argument that hath not yet been handled in its utmoſt Extent, and may, perhaps, aſk Your Patience, on ſome Other Occaſion: But the Time to which I am confined, is now almoſt run out; and there are yet Other Inſtances behind, to be inſiſted on. For

Here, not only External Neceſſities are relieved, but Inward Wants alſo are

ſupplied:

ſupplied; not Ill Manners only are out- SERM.
wardly corrected, but Ill Diſpoſitions II.
alſo are bettered, Ill Minds reformed. And every ſingle Inſtance in this kind is not confined to the Perſon who receives the Benefit, but is a real Service to a whole Community. It puts a Stop to a ſpreading Plague; nay, it gets Ground upon it, by making Thoſe, who have had the Infection, turn Phyſicians to Others, by their Example, and Future Good Manners.

Nay, Here, Men recover their Underſtandings as well as their Virtues; that is, they recover their Very Selves: and are made once again Members of the Rational Creation, able to See and Know their Duty, and to Guide themſelves by that Knowledge of it; to pay their *Reaſonable Service* to God, and to maintain a Civil Intercourſe with Men.

And on this Occaſion, that *Worthy and Learned Perſon* deſerves a Particular and Grateful Mention, who hath, by his Eminent Skill, aſſiſted the Hoſpi-

SERM. II. tal to be Charitable in This Way, to much greater Numbers of *Lunaticks*, than have been known to be Cured in Former Times.

So that this Great Receptacle of Miſerable Objects of every kind, ſeems to be like that Medicinal Pool at *Bethesda*, where there were Virtues proper for every Malady; all Infirmities were equally healed, in Thoſe, who had the Happineſs to get into it. I can carry the Parallel no farther, I thank God.——For the Prudence and Vigilance of its Governors, as it hitherto *hath*, ſo, I queſtion not, always *will* take Care, that (Contrary to what happened to the Impotent Man in that Story) They who have moſt need of the Pool, ſhall ever have the Happineſs to get firſt into it. Impartiality is the Soul of Mercy, as well as Juſtice; and adds Farther Degrees of Uſe and Beauty to the moſt Uſeful and Beautiful Thing in the World.

To give You, therefore, in Little, the true Character of this great Benefaction; As Charity compriſeth almoſt all Kinds

Kinds of Virtues; ſo doth This Foun- SERM.
dation take in almoſt all Sorts of Cha- II.
rities!

But though all the Chief Kinds of Beneficence are here purſued, yet many Miſerable Objects in Each Kind are not poſſible to be reached, with the preſent Stock of Charity, which belongs either to this Hoſpital, or to all Her other Rivals in This *Labour of Love*. God open the Hands of the Rich, and direct the Hearts of the Merciful, to build upon the Foundation Their Forefathers have laid; and to ſupply what is wanting, to complete their Deſigns! Approving Themſelves thus, the true Heirs of Their Piety and Bounty, as well as of their Wealth! Elſe theſe Great Buildings and Endowments of a former Age, like the Virtuous Acts and Atchievements of the firſt Founders of Noble Families, will become a Reproach, rather than be an Honour, to a Degenerate and Worthleſs Poſterity.

Conſider with Your Selves, How God hath bleſt this City for the ſake of the

SERM. II. mighty Works that have been done in Her; I ſay, for the *ſake* of them ---For let a Man carry his Thoughts back to that Time, when theſe Good Deſigns were firſt ſet on foot, and he ſhall find, that from thence the Riſe and Growth of this City, in Trade, Wealth, Intereſt, and Greatneſs, is preciſely to be dated.

May it grow on, in the ſame Proportion! and by the ſame Means alſo! That is, may there ſtill be found ſuch a Number of Charitable Perſons in it, as will continue the Character which hath hitherto belonged to it; and by That means, ſecure the Continuation of God's Bleſſings upon it. May Charity go on *to have its perfect Work*; not Living merely upon the Old Stock, not continuing at a ſtay; but Growing and Increaſing ſtill, as the Neceſſities of ſome Men increaſe, and the Abilities of Others to Relieve them! And thus ſpreading itſelf to a wider Compaſs, it ſhall aſſuredly procure a Greater Share of God's Mercies, and *Cover* a greater *Multitude of our Sins*.

That

That this may be the Caſe, the Good and Merciful God grant, through the Great Steward and Diſpenſer of his Mercies, Chriſt the Righteous! *To whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Adoration, and Praiſe, Now, and Ever! Amen!* SERM. II.

The

A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

October 21, 1694.

ISAIAH lx. 22.

A Little one ſhall become a Thouſand, and a Small one a ſtrong Nation: I, the Lord, will haſten it, in His Time.

SERM. III.

THE Evangelic Prophet is very particular, throughout this Chapter, in deſcribing the *ſudden and mighty Increaſe of Chriſtianity*, its triumphant Progreſs

SERM. III. greſs through all Nations, and its Prevalence over all the other Religions of the World. And this wondrous Enlargement of it he takes occaſion (at the Cloſe of the Chapter) to repreſent as ſo much the more Admirable, on the account of that Small Appearance it ſhould make at firſt, thoſe Slender and Unpromiſing Beginnings, with which it ſhould ſet out. *A little one*, ſays he, in the Words I have read to you, *ſhall become a Thouſand; and a Small one a ſtrong Nation: I, the Lord, will haſten it, in His* (i. e. *in the* Meſſiah's) *time*. From which Words, therefore, I ſhall, without farther Preface, take occaſion to raiſe theſe ſeveral Heads of Diſcourſe.

I. *Firſt*, I ſhall briefly repreſent to You the *Matter of Fact* itſelf, to which this Prophecy refers, how *ſwift* and *ſtrange* a *Progreſs the Goſpel* made at, and after its firſt ſetting out from *Jeruſalem*.

II. *Secondly*, I ſhall prove to you, that this *Succeſs* of it *muſt* have been *Miraculous*, and

and owing *chiefly* to the mighty Operations, SERM.
and effectual Aſſiſtances of the Holy Spi- III.
rit of God. After eſtabliſhing which great Truth upon firm and proper Arguments, I ſhall, in the

Third place, fairly lay together what III.
can be offered to evade the Force of them; and give the ſeveral *Objections* their *Anſwers*.

Fourthly, I ſhall conſider, How Great IV.
and how diſtinguiſhing an *Advantage* this was to the *Chriſtian Inſtitution*, and to what *Uſeful Ends* and *Purpoſes* the Conſideration of it may be applied.

Fifthly, and *Laſtly*, I ſhall enquire in- V.
to the Time *when*, and the Manner *how*, this *Miracle ceaſed*; and make ſome ſuitable Reflexions upon it, with regard, both to Thoſe who lived Then, when this Stop was put to the Goſpel, and to Us, who live Now, in the latter Ages of the World.

Firſt,

SERM. III. *First*, I am to repreſent to You the *Matter of Fact* itſelf, to which the Prophecy of the Text refers; how *ſwift* and *ſtrange* a *Progreſs* the *Goſpel* really made at, and after its firſt ſetting out from *Jeruſalem*. And the Account of this is as much above Imagination, as it is beyond Diſpute.

From St. *Luke* we learn, that, upon the Aſcent of Our Saviour, the *little Flock*, He had gathered, conſiſted of but *One hundred and Twenty* Diſciples: Theſe received a mighty Addition to their Number, on the very Day of Pentecoſt (the Day, on which the *Goſpel*, as well as the *Law*, was firſt *promulged)* even on That Day *Three Thouſand Souls* were brought over to the Faith, by a Sermon of St. *Peter's*: ſo well did that Spiritual Fiſher begin to make good the Character, which Chriſt had given of him, that *he ſhould catch Men!* Acts vi. 7. After this, *the number of the Diſciples multiplied in* Jeruſalem *greatly*, ſaith the ſame holy Pen, (greatly, even in proportion to their

their firſt Increaſe:) and from thence the Doctrine was ſoon carried into all the Remoter Regions of the Earth; inſomuch that the Book of the *Apoſtles Acts* (which being written by St. *Luke*, the Companion of St. *Paul*, is chiefly taken up in giving an Account of that particular Apoſtle's Labours, and Travels; and of thoſe of them only, which he underwent in the Firſt Years of his Miniſtry: I ſay, even this Book itſelf) doth contain an Account of the ſpreading of the Goſpel, forwards, through many Eaſtern Countries; and, backwards, through a great part of the Weſt: of its piercing, on the one ſide into all the Civilized, and ſome of the Barbarous Provinces of *Aſia*; and, on the other, as far as the great Metropolis of *Europe*, *Rome* itſelf; *ſo mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed!* Acts xix. 20.

SERM. III.

Indeed, the Writers of the Story of the Church do, with one Conſent, agree, that *Scythia*, *India*, *Gaul*, and *Egypt*, all the moſt diſtant Parts of the World Then known had the Doctrine of Chriſt conveyed to them in leſs than forty Years,

i. e.

SERM. III.

i. e. before the Deſtruction of the *Jewiſh* State by *Titus*.

And what Degree of Succeſs the Voice of theſe Preachers had in the ſeveral Countries, through which it ſounded, we may learn from the Ancient Apologiſts, who, ere Two Centuries were as yet run out, pleaded for Chriſtianity, on the account of its vaſt and incredible Numbers repreſented to the Heathen Emperors, that their Courts, their Camps, their Cities, their Provinces, were all full of them; and that it was impoſſible to extirpate them, without deſtroying the far Greater Part of their Subjects.

The Goſpel is frequently in the New Teſtament compared to *Light:* and it did in nothing more reſemble Light than in This, that, as ſoon as the Heavenly Doctrine, therein contained, aroſe upon the World, it darted its bright Rays, and diffuſed its quickning Influence from Eaſt to Weſt, with an inconceivable Swiftneſs. This *Kingdom of God came not with Obſervation, neither could Men ſay, Lo Here, and Lo there!* That is, (as we

Luke xvii. 20, 21.

may

may interpret the Words) it did not eſta- SERM.
bliſh itſelf like other Kingdoms, in a III.
ſlow and leiſurely manner, ſo as that
Lookers-on might trace it eaſily from its
Riſe through the ſeveral Steps of its Pro-
greſs; but fixed itſelf at once almoſt every
where, with ſo rapid and amazing a
Courſe, as did, as it were, leave the Eyes
and Obſervation of Men behind it. And
ſtill, as it went along, it gained mighty
Spoils from all Religions, and gathered
vaſt Multitudes of every Country under its
Banners. And, therefore, well did the
Founder of this Kingdom thus propheſy
concerning it:----*Unto what is the King-* Luke xiii.
dom of God like? And whereunto ſhall I re- 18, 19,
ſemble it? It is like a Grain of Muſtard- 20, 21.
Seed, which a Man took, and threw into his
Garden; and it grew and waxed a great
Tree: and the Fowls of the Air lodged in
the Branches of it. And again he ſaid,
Whereunto ſhall I liken the Kingdom of God?
It is like Leaven, which a Woman took, and
hid in three Meaſures of Meal, until the
Whole was leavened.

But

SERM. III. But becauſe the Matter of Fact itſelf, [That there was ſuch a ſudden and prodigious Increaſe of Converts to Chriſtianity] is on all Hands ſo well agreed upon, as to need no ſolemn Proof: it may ſuffice to have given this ſhort Account of it.

II. I go on now, in the *Second* Place, to prove, that this Succeſs of the *Goſpel* was certainly *miraculous*, and owing *chiefly* to the mighty Operations, and effectual Aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit of God: and that, for this plain Reaſon; becauſe the *Natural* and Viſible Cauſes, which concurred to the Production of this great Effect, were not any ways Equal to the Effect produced; and, therefore, ſome *Supernatural* and inviſible Cauſe muſt needs have given Birth to it.

The *Appearing* Cauſes and Inſtruments of this Wondrous Revolution were, chiefly, Twelve Men, of obſcure Birth and Parentage, of the meaneſt Education, of the plaineſt and ſimpleſt Underſtandings, unpoliſhed by Learning and Eloquence, unim-

unimproved by Experience and Converſe; Men of no Subtlety, no Art, no Addreſs; who had no manner of Authority, Intereſt, or Repute in the World: Theſe Men undertake to convince the World, that one *Jeſus*, a Man, who had juſt before expired publicly on a Croſs, was the true God, bleſſed for ever; and, in Conſequence of this, to preach up a Doctrine, the moſt unwelcome to Fleſh and Blood that could be, the moſt repugnant to Men's natural Deſires and Inclinations, to their ſettled Habits, and inveterate Prejudices; contrary to the Eſtabliſhed Rites and Religions of all Countries, and in all Ages of the World. They ſet out from *Jeruſalem*, with this Deſign; they diſperſe themſelves through all the Quarters of the Earth; they ſucceed every where: and, in a very ſhort time, prevail with great Multitudes, in every Nation, and Kingdom, to ſubmit to the Laws, and to own the Religion of Jeſus. SERM. III.

Now, I ſay, here was no manner of Proportion between the Cauſe and its Effect;

SERM. III. between the Work which was wrought, and the Inſtruments which wrought it: and therefore we may, and muſt from hence conclude, that a Divine Inviſible Power went along with them in every Step, and *miraculouſly* bleſſed their Endeavours. Which Truth, that it may appear to you in its full Strength and Evidence, I ſhall conſider more particularly, which (naturally ſpeaking) are the beſt Advantages for a New Opinion to ſet up with, and under what Circumſtances it is moſt likely to prevail; and I ſhall ſhew, that the Chriſtian Religion was utterly deſtitute of Every One of theſe Advantages, and yet, nevertheleſs, *did* prevail.

Now there are *Four* Things, that chiefly conduce towards the ſpreading of any new Doctrine, and moſt remarkably make way for its Reception in the World.

As, 1*ſt*, If the *Principles* of it be ſuited to the *Luſts*, the *Intereſts*, and *Wiſhes* of Thoſe, among whom it is to be propagated.

2*dly*,

SERM. III.

2*dly*, If it be *ſupported* and *countenanced* by Perſons in Power and *Authority*, of great *Name* and *Note*, if it be either forcibly obtruded upon Men by Sanguinary Laws and Edicts, or more indirectly advanced by Art and Management, and the Methods of worldly Prudence.

3*dly*, If it be firſt brought into the World in *dark* and *barbarous Ages*, when Men are either too Rude and Illiterate, to be Able to weigh, and diſpute the Truth of it, or too much ſunk in Sloth and Vice, to be Willing to do it. Or,

4*thly*, If it be not propoſed to Men, all *at once*, but be inſinuated into them *by Degrees*, Secretly, and Inſenſibly.

1. As to the *Firſt* of theſe, it is certain, that nothing recommends a new Doctrine ſo much, or goes ſo far towards promoting an Univerſal Reception of it, as its falling in with the corrupt Deſires and Inclinations, the Paſſions and Prejudices of Men. For Men are, without Difficulty, brought to believe an Opinion true, which they wiſh true beforehand. And this was the Way in which that

SERM. III. cunning Impoſtor, *Mahomet*, ſet up for a new Prophet. He made his Doctrine as reliſhing and palatable as he could; contrived it on purpoſe, ſo as that it might gratify Men's Luſts and Appetites; and, eſpecially, that it might comply with the looſe and wanton Manners of the *Eaſt*, where he erected his Standard.

And thus alſo, ever ſince, hath Libertiniſm of all kinds promoted its Intereſt, and increaſed its Party. Falſe and fooliſh Opinions have gotten footing, and thriven, in prejudice to true Religion, and ſound Morality; becauſe there was ſomething in them, which flattered either our Vanity, our Luſt, or our Pride, and fell in with a darling Inclination. And to this ſingle Art Mr. *Hobbs* owed all his Reputation, and his Followers: it was not his Philoſophy, and his boaſted Reaſon, that drew Men in; but the Skill he had in fitting his Principles to Men's Conſtitutions, and Tempers: He knew what would take, and be liked; and he knew how to expreſs it after a taking manner; and no wonder

wonder then, if it were greedily entertained. To talk againſt received Opinions, and in behalf of ſome beloved Vices, and Frailties; to dreſs up his Diſcourſe in all the natural Beauties of Language, and to give it beſide the Air (and he gave it nothing but the Air) of Demonſtration; This, he ſaw, would be a ſure way of engaging the Men of Wit and Pleaſure on his Side; and This, therefore, he followed with Application and Succeſs; like one of the *Children of This World, who are in their Generation, wiſer than the Children of Light.* Luke xvi. 8.

SERM. III.

But Chriſtianity, when it ſet out, took none of theſe Methods of recommending itſelf, and enlarging its Intereſts: on the contrary, it propoſed plain, naked Truths, without Colours, and Diſguiſes, or any regard to what was Agreeable and Pleaſing. It held forth high and inconceivable Myſteries, which the Pride of Man would make him apt to ſuſpect, becauſe he could not perfectly comprehend; and it preached up harſh and ungrateful Doctrines, which did Vio-

67053

SERM. III. lence to Men's Natures, and which it was death to them to think of entertaining. And yet, I ſay, under this great Diſadvantage it made its way, and proſpered. But,

2*dly*, It is another great Advantage to a riſing Opinion, if it be eſpouſed by Men of Authority, Repute and Parts; who may either force its way into the World by Dint of Power, or bring it about by Arts of Management and Contrivance. In this manner the Prophet of the Eaſt hewed out his way by the Power of the Sword; took advantage from the Diviſions and Weakneſs of Chriſtendom, to arm a Savage Multitude, and make large Inroads upon it; and, having firſt brought into Subjection the Bodies of Men, had no hard Taſk, afterwards, to enſlave their Souls.

In like manner the Papal Uſurpations often prevailed; the Biſhops of *Rome* got Zealous Princes into their Intereſt, and made them blindly obedient to the Holy See; and then, by their Help, impoſed their own Decrees upon whole unwilling Provinces

Provinces and Kingdoms. And, as ſome of their Encroachments thus got footing, ſo many others, we know, were brought in, at firſt, and have been ſupported ever ſince, by the higheſt and moſt refined Arts of Policy. That See hath never wanted, from the very Moment, ſince it firſt ſet up its Pretences, a number of ſkilful Managers, who have continually pleaded its Cauſe, and carried on its Intereſts, with all the Dexterity and Addreſs, with all the Induſtry and Zeal, of which Human Wit is capable: It hath ever had the warmeſt and ableſt, (I had almoſt ſaid the wiſeſt) Heads employed in its Defence; and hath taken care to make ſure of them, by Bountiful Rewards, dealt out in proportion to their Services; and by making a Zeal for the Papal Chair, a ſure and never failing Step towards all manner of Honours and Advantages: and no wonder, therefore, if its Deluſions have ſpread ſo far, and wide, and infected ſuch Numbers. SERM. III.

It was much the ſame caſe, with regard to the Broachers of Hereſy in the an-

SERM. III. cient Church; they were generally leading Men, of ſome Figure and Repute in the World, of great Wit and Subtlety; and, by the Help of theſe, they were able to raiſe a Duſt, and make a Noiſe; to form a Party, and ſet themſelves at the Head of it.

But now, when Chriſtianity firſt appeared, how weak and defenceleſs was it, how artleſs and undeſigning! How utterly unſupported either by the Secular Arm, or Secular Wiſdom! *I ſend you forth*, ſaid our Saviour to his Apoſtles, *as Sheep in the midſt of Wolves*: And, accordingly, they went forth, in the Spirit of Simplicity, of Humility, and Meekneſs; armed only with Truth, and Innocence; a good Cauſe, and an equal Reſolution: *The Weapons of their Warfare were not Carnal, but Spiritual!* The Meſſengers of theſe glad Tidings were ſo far from having a Name in the World, that they were contemptible: were ſcorned as *Jews*, by the reſt of Mankind; and as the meaneſt and loweſt of *Jews*, by the *Jews* themſelves; and were not likely,

Matth. x. 16.

2 Cor. x. 4.

likely, therefore, to credit the high Em- SERM.
baſſy, on which they came. They left III.
their Nets, and their Hooks, (the Only
things, probably, that they underſtood)
to come into a New World, wherein
they were perfect Strangers, and to preach
a new Goſpel, with which all Men were
unacquainted; and they preached it, not
to the *Wiſe*, the *Mighty*, or the *Noble*,
who, when converted, might have for-
warded its Reception by their Influence;
but to the *Fooliſh*, *Weak*, *and Baſe*, who
were able to do nothing for its Advan-
tage, but by Living according to the
Rules, and Dying for the Truth of it.
As they had no Help from the Powers of
this World, Civil or Military, ſo had
they all the Oppoſition that was poſſible;
which they withſtood, and baffled: they
ſowed the good Seed of the Word under
the very Feet of the *Roman* Magiſtrates,
and Soldiers, who, though they trod it
down, and rooted it up, yet could not
deſtroy it ſo far, but that ſtill it ſprang
out again, and yielded a fruitful and glo-
rious Harveſt. A

SERM. III.

3*d* Thing, that promotes the Progreſs of a New Religion, is, if it be brought into the World, in Dark and Barbarous Times; when Men are either too Rude and Illiterate, to be able to weigh, and to diſpute the Truth of it, or too much ſunk in Sloth and Vice, to be Willing to do it. And this, again, cannot but put us in Mind of the *Romiſh* Superſtitions: for it is plain, that they took That time of ſettling and ſpreading their Empire, which, of all times ſince the Coming of *Chriſt*, was the moſt Ignorant, and the leaſt Inquiſitive; when Men were Vicious, Lazy, Diſpirited, Fearful, and Credulous; when groſs Darkneſs ſate upon the Face of the Weſt; when the Irruptions of the *Goths* and *Vandals* had deſtroyed all the Old Learning, as well as the Old Buildings, and left nothing but Ignorance and Barbarity behind them. Then, in that *Night*, as the Parable ſpeaks, did the cunning *Enemy* come, and *ſow his Tares*, when there was no body at Work, or awake to obſerve him. And, when, he had thus covertly ſown them,

them, what Wonder was it, that they ſhould grow up together with the Corn and Flouriſh? SERM. III.

But did the Goſpel make ſuch Advantages as theſe, of Men's Credulity, and Supineneſs? No; it took all ways of being Tried and Examined to the uttermoſt: It alarmed the World a good while before-hand, and gave fair Warning of its Approach, by plain Signs and Predictions: and if the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament will not be admitted as Proofs in this caſe, ſure *Tacitus* and *Virgil* may be heard; the firſt of which lays it down as a known Truth, that there was (about the Time of our Saviour) a ſtrong Tradition, thro' all the *Eaſt*, of a certain mighty Prince, that was then, and there expected to ariſe, and to govern the World; and the Latter, out of the *Sibylline* Verſes, tranſcribed ſuch an Account of things, as did evidently, and could only belong to the Days of the Goſpel, and the Reign of the Meſſiah.

But the moſt Obſervable thing on this Head, is, that God pitched upon that parti-

SERM. III. particular Point of Time, for the Manifeſtation of his Goſpel, when good Senſe, and Learning, and Wit, were at the higheſt; when the *Roman* Empire was in its full Glory, and, together with it, all the Arts and Sciences flouriſhed: when the World enjoyed a profound Peace, and was at Liberty to examine the Truth of an Opinion, which ſet up with ſuch Pretences: Then did the Glorious Light of the Goſpel ſhine forth, and dazzle the Eyes even of Thoſe, who were thought to ſee beſt, and furtheſt. And ſoon afterwards the Apoſtles opened their Heavenly Commiſſion, and executed it publicly, challenging thoſe who looked on, with all their Curioſity, Subtlety, and Spite, to diſprove, or blemiſh it. The Doctrine of the Croſs ſhewed itſelf barefaced to all the Wits and Sages of both *Rome* and *Athens*; and defied their Doubts, and their Reaſonings. And yet, under Theſe diſcouraging Circumſtances alſo, it *took Root downwards, and brought forth Fruit upwards*, ſpeedily, and abundantly. A

4th

SERM. III.

4*th* Help towards eſtabliſhing any New Opinions in Religion is, if they be not propoſed to Men all at Once, but inſinuated into them only by inſenſible Steps and Degrees: and this Method hath often made way for the Belief of the moſt monſtrous Doctrines, and the Entertainment of the wildeſt Abſurdities. Witneſs [once more] ſeveral Articles in the *Roman Catholick* Faith; which, had they been offered to the Minds of Men, at firſt, in their full Latitude, had been rejected with Indignation and Horror; but being propoſed at half Views, and advanced by little and little, were alſo gradually admitted by Men, not well aware of their Utmoſt Import and Tendency: every firſt Step into Error ſmoothing the Way toward a ſecond, and ſo on, till the Paſſage was widened enough for the Groſſeſt Contradictions to enter in at it.

Far from this Artificial Method of winning Belief, was the Religion of *Jeſus:* Upon its firſt Appearance, after the Deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, it offered itſelf to the View of Men, at full length, and

SERM. III. and in all its Proportions. No Moral Precept was reſerved for a more Convenient Time, no Doctrine (no Great, Fundamental Doctrine) was diſguiſed, or concealed. The Meſſage it brought, it delivered, plainly and openly, at once; the moſt unwelcome Practical Truths, as well as Thoſe, which were better known, and received; the Sublimeſt Points of Faith, together with ſuch as were more Eaſy and Credible.

The Primitive Apoſtles did not, like thoſe of a Later Date, the Fathers of the Miſſion of *China*, preach up firſt a *Glorified*, and then a *Crucified* Saviour; but bore the Scandal of the Croſs whereſoever, and to whomſoever they opened the Doctrines of it; The *ſlaying* of *Je-*
Acts v. 30. *ſus*, and his being *hanged on a Tree*, is mentioned in one of the firſt Sermons of St. *Peter*. This (humanly ſpeaking) was an Unlikely way of gaining Proſelytes; and yet, as unlikely a Way as it was, Thus were innumerable Proſelytes gained.

Let us lay together what hath been ſaid:——The Goſpel of *Chriſt*, at its Earlieſt

Earlieſt Appearance, had all the Probabi- SERM.
lities in the World againſt its Succeſs: III.
for it was poſſeſſed ſcarce of any One of
thoſe Advantages, which do moſt ſignal-
ly recommend a new Doctrine, and make
it thrive. It had no complying Tenets,
to ſooth Men's Appetites and Paſſions!
but was all Harſh and Auſtere. It had
no Encouragement, no Protection from
the Civil Power; no Force, or Cunning
to uphold it; no Men of Eminence, and
Eſteem to engage on its Side. The Age,
which was pitched upon for the Diſco-
very of it, was more diſcerning and en-
lightned, more curious and inquiſitive,
than, perhaps, any that either preceded
or followed it: and therefore the Succeſs
of this Doctrine could not be owing to
Men's Ignorance or Supineneſs. Finally,
its Promulgers delivered it not out by
Parcels, as is the Way of Cunning and
Deſigning Men; but offered the Whole
of it to be all together examined, and
compared. Nevertheleſs, though preſſed
with All Theſe Clogs and Incumbrances,
it ſprang forth, and made its Way into

SERM. III. the World, by a ſwift and incredible Progreſs.

The Inference from hence is plain and indubitable; That a Divine Power and Virtue certainly went along with it, to ſupply what was Wanting to it, upon Other Accounts; and that its *Increaſe* muſt needs have been *Supernatural*, and *Miraculous*: ſo that, were we acquainted with nothing more, concerning the Apoſtles, than what the Four Evangeliſts have left us; were the Book of their *Acts* loſt, and, together with it, an Account of the wondrous Effuſion of the Holy Spirit upon them, at the Day of *Pentecoſt*; and of the mighty Signs and Wonders, which they afterwards performed, in Virtue of that Unction: I ſay, were we in the Dark to all theſe Tranſactions, which declare the Chriſtian Religion to have been *propagated* by *Miracle*; yet ſtill every Conſidering Man muſt think, that there was ſomewhat *Miraculous* in it. Such an Increaſe, from ſuch Beginnings; ſuch a wonderful Revolution, brought about by

by ſuch weak and diſproportioned Inſtruments; is itſelf a *Miracle*, and the greateſt of Miracles; and doth as evidently aſſure us, that the Preaching of the Apoſtles was in the *Demonſtration of the Spirit, and of Power*, as if we had heard them ſpeaking Strange Tongues, ſeen them healing the Blind and Lame, and reviving the Dead. SERM. III. 1 Cor. ii. 4.

III. In which Truth, that we may be yet further confirmed, let us conſider (as I propoſed in the *Third* Place,) what *Shifts* the Enemies of the Goſpel make uſe of, to evade the Force of this preſſing Argument. And the utmoſt that any of them pretend to ſay, is, as follows: 'Tis true, they will own, Chriſtians multiplied very faſt, and the Increaſe of them was, in ſome Senſe, *Miraculous:* That is, it was *wonderful*; as every Unuſual Thing is to Thoſe, who do not know, or conſider the Cauſes of it. But to a Man, they ſay, who dares to go out of the Common Road, and to think for himſelf, it will appear, that there was at that time a Sett

SERM. III. of *Natural* Cauſes on foot, ſufficient to account for this Effect, without any recourſe to a *Divine* and *Supernatural* Agent. The Apoſtles indeed were Twelve plain Illiterate Men, who had not, of Themſelves, Force, or Skill enough, to bring about ſuch an Event: but their Natural Inability was ſupplied by a favourable Juncture, by an happy Coincidence of ſuch conſpiring Cauſes, and Accidental Advantages, as mightily helped on the Work. For Example:

The *Sufferings* of thoſe poor bigotted Creatures, the *Martyrs*, made mighty Impreſſions upon Men; eſpecially upon thoſe of the ſame Rank with the Sufferers, the Common People; who never fail to take the ſide of the Oppreſſed, and to think that Cauſe good (let it be what it will) for the Profeſſion of which Men are uſed ill. Then the *Purity of the Chriſtian Morals* was a mighty Argument to bring the Men of Probity and Virtue into the Intereſts of the Goſpel. And ſo likewiſe was the *Analogy* of ſome of its *Myſtical Truths*, to the *Doctrines* of *Plato*, (then,

(then in great Eſteem and Vogue) a very good Bait to the Men of Philoſophy, and Learning. The *Diſtribution* of *Goods*, which the firſt Chriſtians made, and their Living together in Common, was a good Reaſon for many Mens embracing that Faith which, they were ſure, would maintain them. The Caſual *Ceſſation* of *Oracles* was immediately turned to the Advantage of the Religion of *Chriſt*, as if *That* had procured it. And the *Deſtruction* of the *Jewiſh State* contributed greatly to the Increaſe of the Chriſtian Numbers; becauſe it ſeemed to have been foretold by the Founder of their Faith: and therefore luckily coming to paſs about that time, raiſed an high Opinion in Men, of his Perſon, and Doctrine; and inclined them to think, that his Inſtitution, then newly ſet up, was deſigned by God to ſucceed in the Room of the *Jewiſh* Eſtabliſhment, which, about the ſame time, happened to be pulled down. In the mean while, the *Rulers* of the World *overlooked*, and *neglected* to *cruſh*, a Doctrine, which was ſo harmleſs in itſelf,

SERM. III.

SERM. III. and ſo unlikely to ſucceed on the Account of its Abettors; till, through Their Connivance, it was at laſt Univerſally received among the Vulgar Sort, and the Number of its Votaries was grown ſo formidable, that even Princes themſelves were forced, for their own Eaſe and Intereſt, to come into it, and profeſs it.

And thus, ſay they, ſeveral extraordinary and unheeded Advantages concurring to favour the Growth of Chriſtianity, it *grew* indeed *mightily and prevailed*; as a little River will ſwell high and ſpread itſelf wide, and run far, when ſwoln by Caſual Rains, and by many other Streams, which have emptied themſelves at once into it. Such is the Account they pretend to give of the Riſe and Progreſs of our Faith, from *ſecond Cauſes*, without calling *a firſt*, to ſolve the Appearance.

In oppoſition to theſe Pretences, I will ſhew, that the Cauſes here aſſigned, were utterly inſufficient to produce the Event, for which they are aſſigned: a ſhort Review of them, I think, (and the Time will

will allow of but a ſhort one) will eaſily ſatisfy us concerning it. SERM. III.

The *Blood of the Martyrs* was, indeed, what it hath been often ſtyled, the *Seed of the Church:* But how? Not, certainly, by alluring Men to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, at the Time *when* thoſe Martyrs ſuffered; for nothing could have a greater Tendency to frighten and diſcourage Men from profeſſing the Goſpel, than to find, that they ſhould be perſecuted, and muſt die for it. This only is meant by that Saying, and thus far it holds good; That the Sufferings and Torments, which the firſt Chriſtians underwent ſo willingly and bravely, were a ſtrong evidence of the Truth of that doctrine, which could inſpire its Followers with ſo much courage, Conſtancy, and Patience; and diſpoſed Men mightily to embrace the Religion of Chriſt *afterwards*, in better and more quiet Times. But before that this motive could have any conſiderable Force and Influence, the Goſpel had *already* ſpread and ſettled itſelf every where:

SERM. III. and therefore nothing can well be accounted for by it, but the acceſſion which was made to Chriſtianity, *after* it was ſufficiently eſtabliſhed; and This, we are ready to confeſs, had nothing Extraordinary in it, nor are we at preſent making any Enquiries concerning it.

The ſame Anſwer ſerves to diſprove that Other pretended Account of this Increaſe, drawn from the *Deſtruction of the Jewiſh State*. We allow it to have added to the Numbers of Chriſtian converts, *when* it happened; but it happened not till near forty years after the Death of *Chriſt*; and by that time, Chriſtianity was ſtrong enough of itſelf, and needed no Aids. And, even when this Event happened, though ſeveral *Jews* promoted the Intereſts of the Goſpel, by embracing the Faith, yet the Obſtinate Part of them, which ſtood out, did it much more harm than the Proſelytes did it good. For the uncomplying *Jews* were not ſatisfied with rejecting Chriſtianity themſelves; but

but made it their Buſineſs to render it odious, ſuſpected, and contemptible to the Heathens alſo, in all the Corners of the *Earth*, to which they were driven. SERM. 111.

The *Purity of the Chriſtian Morals*, and the anſwerable Lives of Chriſtian Converts, did indeed very naturally lead Men to admire and value the Doctrine of Chriſt; but by no means, to come under the Yoke of it: for though moſt Men have an Eſteem for ſtrict Rules, and ſtrict Livers; yet Few care to practiſe the one, or to imitate the other. And nothing, I think, could be contrived ſo effectual, (next to the former wiſe Motive from the Sufferings of the Martyrs) to *deter* Men from Chriſtianity, as to tell them, that, when they took it upon them, they muſt renounce their deareſt Appetites, and Paſſions, and deny their very Selves. And I deſire the Men, who raiſe theſe Objections againſt the Divine Original of the Goſpel, to tell us fairly, Whether, if they had lived at that time they would have come in upon *This* Prin-

SERM. III. ciple? I am ſure, they would not; becauſe it is *This* Principle alone, [that they muſt part with their unlawful Satisfactions, and Pleaſures, if they do] which keeps them out of it now. Therefore, neither can This be any ſufficient Reaſon for the ſudden and wide Growth of Chriſtianity.

The *Analogy of ſome myſtical Truths in the Goſpel to the Doctrine of* Plato, is yet a weaker Plea. For this Motive is calculated to touch but very few, only the Philoſophers of the *Academic* School. And with ſuch, it could have no Great Weight, ſurely; or, at leaſt, not enough to over-balance that Scorn and Contempt, with which, on other accounts, they treated the Chriſtian Religion, and its Promulgers; That for its ſhort, Unphiloſophical way of propoſing Truths, without Demonſtration, or Reaſoning; and Thoſe, for their Ignorance, and the Meanneſs of their Education. Accordingly, we find not that the Sublime Myſteries of our Faith made any Impreſſion on theſe haughty Reaſoners: St. *Paul* was derided at *Athens*, when he propoſed them;

them; nor can we certainly learn that any one Philoſopher, of Note, embraced our Religion, till it had been for many Years preached and diſſeminated, and had taken deep root in the World. SERM. III.

The *Caſual Ceſſation of Oracles* (as 'tis called) about the Time of promulging the Goſpel, was not Caſual, but the direct and genuine Effect of it: and, we own, had Men underſtood it to be ſo Then, and imputed the Total Silence of thoſe Oracles to its True Cauſe, ſuch a Perſuaſion would have been very uſeful towards bringing in the Heathen World to the Acknowledgment of *Chriſt*. But we deny that they did at all underſtand, or allow it to be ſo. And for a plain Proof of this, we refer ourſelves to that Celebrated Diſcourſe in *Plutarch*, about the Reaſons of this Ceſſation; where, among Many, which that Learned Man aſſigns for it, (vain Reaſons indeed, and ſuch as ſhew him to have been at a Loſs for the True One!) This of the Coming of *Chriſt* is not mentioned, or hinted at: though he gives there ſuch an Account of

SERM. III. of things, that a Chriſtian might eaſily prove, from what *He* relates, that it was really the Coming of Chriſt which effected it. But this is a Point of too important and nice a nature to be ſettled incidentally, and might well deſerve to be conſidered in an entire Diſcourſe.

Again, neither can any probable Account be given of this matter, from the *Charitable Diſtribution of their Goods, which the firſt Chriſtians made.* For, ſuppoſing that ſome of the poorer ſort might be tempted by this Motive; yet, ſurely, thoſe who had wherewithal to ſuſtain themſelves, and were eaſy in their Circumſtances, did not come in upon it: It will not be ſaid, I hope, that ſuch as *made* this Diſtribution of their Goods (which will be found to have been an inconſiderable Number) came in themſelves to *partake* of it. Nor could theſe Hopes have any Great Influence, even on the meaner ſort; ſince there was ſomething in the Chriſtian Religion, of far more force to frighten them, than This was to allure them; the ſtrict Rules of

of Honeſty and Temperance, according to which they were bound to live, and the Great Calamities and Perſecutions, which they were ſure to undergo. SERM. III.

Laſtly, No Weight can be laid, in this Caſe, on that *Contempt*, which *Heathen Princes* are ſaid to have had of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and the little Care they, therefore, took to reſtrain it: for it is not true, that they ſtood by unconcerned at its Growth; on the contrary, it is certain, that they looked upon it with a jealous Eye, from its firſt Riſe; and the Early Perſecutions of *Nero* (not to mention thoſe of *Domitian*, which were after the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*) ſhew, that he took great Notice of it, and endeavoured to Extirpate it. However, let the *Roman* Emperors have been never ſo regardleſs of its Increaſe; yet it is certain that they did no ways Countenance it; and that every one, who turned Chriſtian, was ſure by that means to forfeit the Favour of his Prince, and to be looked upon as an Apoſtate from the Religion

SERM. III. Religion of his Country. And how, even under ſuch a Preſſure as this, could Chriſtianity have made ſo rapid and aſtoniſhing a Progreſs, if He, who is mightier than the mightieſt, had not bid it *go forth and proſper* againſt all Human Diſcouragements? Had *this Counſel, or this Work been of Men*, it would, even without any direct Oppoſition from the Temporal Power, have certainly *come to nought*, as *Gamaliel* argued; but *being of God, nothing could overthrow it.*

I do not deny, after all, but that Every one of theſe Particulars might, in a natural way, contribute ſomewhat, either to the Planting, or Spreading of the Goſpel. But I think it is evident, from the ſhort Hints I have ſuggeſted to you, that All of them together were not able to do the thouſandth Part of that Work which is allotted to them. And, therefore, to reſolve this Great Event into a *Conſpiracy* of *ſecond Cauſes*, as it is called, without any regard to the *firſt*, is an abſurd and ſenſeleſs Attempt; and only ſhews us, how very ſtrong an Inclination

clination and Biaſs there is in Some Minds towards Infidelity, which they can be brought to eſpouſe upon ſo very ſlight Grounds. SERM. III.

A Man, who ſhould ſee an Acorn put into the Earth, and perceive in a few Weeks or Months, an Oak ſhooting up from it to a prodigious height, and ſpreading its Branches to an amazing Extent, ſo as to over-top the loftieſt Mountains, and even to cover the whole Field where it grew; might as well ſay, that there was a ſtrange *Conſpiracy of Natural Cauſes*, an extraordinary Degree of Warmth, Moiſture, and ſo forth, which concurred to produce this Effect; as affirm, that the vaſt Succeſs of the Goſpel was owing to thoſe *petty Principles*, from whence Some Men pretend to derive it.

But it muſt be granted to them, that their Thoughts are of a Piece, and that this Opinion of theirs falls in with the reſt of their Syſtem. For their Account of the *New* Creation by Jeſus Chriſt, is much like that which they give of the

Old

SERM. III.

Old one. It was a Lucky Hit of concurring Cauſes which propagated Chriſtianity. And it was a Lucky Hit alſo of dancing Atoms, which firſt made the World: and it is the ſame Lucky Hit, which ſtill preſerves and governs it too. They, who can bring themſelves to believe the Latter of theſe Opinions, may, conſiſtently enough, be ſuppoſed to entertain the Former: But, certainly, no other Creature, but an Atheiſt by Complexion, could ever take up with ſuch pitiful Accounts of Things.

Well then, The Chriſtian Religion, from ſmall and weak Beginnings, ſpread itſelf far, and wide, after a ſudden and ſtrange Manner; and this it did, againſt all Probability, and contrary to all the Rules of Succeſs, which all other Riſing Opinions have ever ſet up with: It had no One of thoſe great Advantages, ſome of which recommend every new Sect, that ſtands, and prevails: and, as for all other Leſſer Helps, and Aſſiſtances towards its Increaſe, which the Wit of Man can aſſign; they are apparently

rently too weak to ſuſtain the Weight that is laid on them. It remains, therefore, that this wondrous Effect ſprang undoubtedly from the immediate Influence of the Firſt Cauſe, actuating after an Extraordinary manner on the Induſtry, and bleſſing the Endeavours of the Apoſtles; ſtirring up the Minds of Men to attend to, and diſpoſing their Hearts to embrace the Truths of the Goſpel; in a Word, accompanying all they ſaid, and did, with mighty Signs and Wonders, with the *Demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power.* SERM. III.

I have fully conſidered *Three* of the *Five* Points, on which I intended to diſcourſe; having repreſented to You,

Firſt, The Matter of Fact itſelf to which the Prophecy of the Text refers; how ſwift and ſtrange a Progreſs the Goſpel really made, at, and after its firſt ſetting out from *Jeruſalem:* Having proved to You,

Secondly, That this Succeſs of it muſt have *been Miraculous.* After which I did, in the

Third

SERM. III.

Third Place, fairly lay together what I thought might be offered to evade the Force of this Argument; and gave the ſeveral Objections their Anſwers. It remains that I ſhould conſider

Fourthly, How great and how diſtinguiſhing an Advantage this brings to the Chriſtian Inſtitution; and to what Uſeful Ends and Purpoſes the Conſideration of it may be applyed: And then,

Laſtly, Enquire into the Time when, and the Manner how this Miracle ceaſed, and make ſome ſuitable Reflexion upon it, with regard both to Thoſe who lived Then, when this Stop was put to the Goſpel, and to Us who live Now in the Latter Ages of the World.

But the handling of theſe two Points muſt be the Work of a Second Diſcourſe.

PART

PART II.

ISAIAH lx. 22.

A Little one ſhall become a Thouſand, and a Small one a ſtrong Nation: I the Lord will haſten it in His Time.

SERM. IV.

OF the *Five* Points which I propoſed from theſe Words, to handle, *Three* have been conſidered: I come now, in the

Fourth place, to ſhew, How great, and how *diſtinguiſhing* an *Advantage* it is to the Chriſtian Inſtitution, to have been propagated after ſo ſwift and unaccountable a manner; to what uſeful *Ends* and *Purpoſes* the Conſideration of it may be applyed. And,

SERM. IV.

1*ſt*, This is, I ſay, an Advantage *peculiar* to the Chriſtian Inſtitution: For no other Religion ever had ſo large an Increaſe, with ſo little of Human Aid and Aſſiſtance; or prevailed in ſuch a manner, as to make a Recourſe to Supernatural Influences neceſſary, in order to explain the Succeſs of it. This may be collected in great meaſure, from what hath been already hinted, in the preceding Diſcourſe. However, I ſhall here reſume the Reflexion, and more particularly and fully evince the Truth of it.

Of all falſe Religions, the *Mahometan* came neareſt to the Chriſtian, in the ſwift manner of its Propagation; for in a ſmall time it over-ran a great Part of the Eaſtern world. But this Succeſs, how extraordinary ſoever, had nothing miraculous in it; nothing, but what may eaſily be accounted for, by reflecting on the Circumſtances (already intimated) with which the Propagation of that Impoſture was attended: Such as the looſe Manners, and lamentable Diviſions of the Chriſtians of that Time; the Suitableneſs of

of *Mahomet's* Doctrine to the ſenſual In- SERM.
clinations of Men, eſpecially of thoſe Eaſt- IV.
ern People, to whom it was firſt ad-
dreſſed; and the Method he uſed of pro-
curing Submiſſion to it, by the Dint of
the Sword, not by the Power of Perſua-
ſion and Argument. A Religion, that
gave a full Indulgence to the Ambition,
the Luſts, and Cruelty of Mankind,
could not fail of gaining Proſelytes; and
when a warlike and a ſavage Race of Men,
united by the Hopes of Rapine and Spoil,
ſet upon a diſſolute, divided, and weak-
ened Enemy (as the Chriſtians then were)
the Succeſs of ſuch an Enterpriſe was
ſure and eaſy: and on the Succeſs of
Mahomet's Arms the Succeſs of his Re-
ligion depended. When, by an unin-
terrupted Courſe of Victories, he had
laid the Foundation of the *Saracen* Em-
pire, it was no wonder that a new Em-
pire ſhould be able to introduce a new
Religion; the Increaſe of the One, was
naturally followed by a proportionable
Enlargement of the Other; which, there-
fore, I ſay, had nothing *miraculous* in

SERM. IV. it; nothing, that rivaled, or any ways reſembled the Succeſs of the *Goſpel* —— that *Stone, which was cut out of the Mountain, without Hands* (*i. e.* without viſible Cauſes and Inſtruments, proportioned to ſuch a Work) *and brake in Pieces all other Kingdoms*, and at laſt became itſelf *a great Mountain, and filled the whole Earth.*

Dan. ii. 34, 35.

As to the *Jewiſh* Religion, it will not admit of any Compariſon with the *Chriſtian*, either as to the Manner of its firſt Reception, or the Addition of Converts afterwards made to it. It was given to the *Iſraelites*, by *Moſes*, in the Wilderneſs, whither he had led them out of the Houſe of Bondage in their Way to *a Land flowing with Milk and Honey.* Now (ſetting aſide the Conſideration of *Miracles* by which the *Jewiſh* and Chriſtian Diſpenſations were alike confirmed) the Reception of the *Law* by the *Iſraelites* from ſuch a Deliverer, under whoſe Conduct and Command they then entirely were, and in a Place, where they had no Communication with the reſt of the World, had

had nothing in it near ſo wonderful as the firſt Plantation of the Chriſtian Church by means of the Apoſtles Preaching. And as to the Acceſſion of Gentile-Converts, after the Tabernacle was ſet up in *Shiloh*; it was too ſmall and inconſiderable, to give the Religion of the *Jews* any Title, or Pretenſion to a Divine Original, on *that* Account. SERM. IV.

The narrow Limits of the *Jewiſh* Church are thus, under the Emblem of a tranſplanted Vine, aptly repreſented by the Pſalmiſt. *Thou haſt brought* (ſays he) *a Vine out of* Egypt, *Thou haſt caſt out the Heathen, and planted it; Thou preparedſt Room for it, and didſt cauſe it to take deep Root, and it filled the Land, viz.* the Land of *Jewry*, wherein it was ſet. *The Hills (i. e.* the Hill-country of *Judah*, the furtheſt Point of *Paleſtine*, Southward) *were covered with the Shadow of it, and the Boughs thereof were like the Cedars of God*, on Mount *Lebanon*, in the Extremity of its Northern Borders. *She ſent out her Boughs into the Sea* (the *Mediterranean* Sea, her ut-

SERM. IV. moſt Limit to the Weſt) *and her Branches to the River*, even as far Eaſtward as the River *Euphrates*. Thus was the *Jewiſh* Church, even in its moſt ample and flouriſhing Condition, ſhut up within the Bounds of *Canaan*, and the Countries adjacent: Whereas that *Muſtard-Seed*, the Kingdom of *Chriſt*, though it were *leſs than all the Seeds that be in the Earth*, yet, *when it was ſown, it grew up, and became greater than all the Herbs, and ſhot out great Branches, and the Fowls of the Air lodged in the Branches of it*; Men of all Countries and all Religions under Heaven flocked to it for Shade and Shelter.

Pſ. lxxx. 8, 9, 10, 11.

Luke xiii. 19. Mark iv. 31, 32.

Indeed the *Moſaic* Law was intended for a ſingle People only, who were to be ſhut in, as it were, from the reſt of the World, by a Fence of Legal Rites, and Typical Ceremonies; and to be kept by that Means ſeparate and unmixed, till the great Antitype, the *Meſſiah*, ſhould appear, and break down this Fence, and lay open this Incloſure, publiſhing a Religion of a more extenſive Nature

Nature and Uſe, which all Mankind ſhould be invited to profeſs, and in which all would have an equal Intereſt. To theſe different Ends the *Law*, and the *Goſpel*, were ſeverally deſigned; and to theſe, therefore, the different Circumſtances of their Promulgation, and the chief Parts of their Worſhip, were ſeverally accommodated. The Law was (as I ſaid) given in the Deſert, to a particular People; the Goſpel was publiſhed in *Jeruſalem*, before a mixed Multitude of various Nations and Languages. The Miracles, by which the Law was confirmed, were done before the *Jews* only, who alone were concerned in them [for as to thoſe performed by *Moſes* in the Sight of *Pharaoh* and the *Egyptians*, they were not intended to authoriſe the *Law*, which was not as yet given, but only to prove his Divine Miſſion for the *Temporal Reſcue* of that People:] Whereas the Goſpel-Miracles were wrought before the Enemies of the *Goſpel*, in all Countries; becauſe in all Countries the Goſpel was to be propagated, believed, and

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. practiſed. The chief Parts of the Jewiſh Worſhip (which conſiſted in Sacrifices) were confined to a certain Place, at which all the Males of that Religion were bound, thrice every Year, to appear; and that Religion, therefore, could be intended for ſuch only as lived at no great Diſtance from the Jewiſh Temple: Whereas, when the Ends of the Earth were to be converted to Chriſt, the Chriſtian Sacrifice of Praiſe and Thankſgiving, and even the great Oblation of the Euchariſt, was to be performed everywhere with equal Degrees of Acceptance, according to the Prediction of *Malachi*, the laſt Prophet of the Jewiſh Diſpenſation. *For from the riſing of the Sun to the going down of the ſame, my Name ſhall be great among the Gentiles; and in every Place Incenſe ſhall be offered unto my Name, and a pure Offering; for my Name ſhall be great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.*

Mal. i. 11.

The *Jewiſh*, then, and *Chriſtian* Inſtitutions, as they are widely different in many Reſpects, ſo particularly in This; that

that the one was, by its original Frame and Intention, limited as to Place, Perſons, and Time: Whereas the other was to be diffuſed throughout the World, and to endure together with it; that is, to be, indeed, what we find it not long after its firſt Erection ſtyled, the *Catholic Church*. *Whereunto*, therefore, *ſhall we liken this Kingdom of God*, and its marvellous Increaſe? *or with what compariſon ſhall we compare it?* There is, indeed, ſome faint Reſemblance of it in the prodigious Fecundity of *Seeds*; which, accordingly our Saviour makes uſe of more than once, to illuſtrate it: but there is nothing parallel to it in the Hiſtory of all the Religions which have ſprung up and obtained among Men, from the Beginning of the World to this Day.

SERM. IV.

Luke iv. 30.

And this *peculiar* Advantage of Chriſtianity is ſo much the more remarkable, becauſe,

2*dly*, It was preſignifyed by *Types*, and foretold by various *Prophecies*. And when, therefore, the Event came to paſs, it did, as it were, point out its Author,

SERM. IV. and declare itſelf to ſpring from Him, who alone *knoweth* and ordereth *the Times and the Seaſons, and calleth the things that are not, as if they were.*

Of *Types*, the moſt illuſtrious, and moſt worthy of our preſent Conſideration, is That, which relates to the wonderful Increaſe of the *Iſraelites* in *Ægypt*, concerning which the Sacred Story ſpeaks in very expreſſive and emphatical Language: *They were fruitful* (ſays *Moſes*) *and increaſed abundantly*, and *multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty, and the Land was filled with them*; and this (it ſeems) notwithſtanding the Arts that were uſed to leſſen their Numbers, notwithſtanding the great Hardſhips and Severities that were laid upon them: For again it is ſaid, *The more the* Ægyptians *afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.* A livelier Image than which there cannot be of the thriving Eſtate of the Chriſtian Church, under all the Cunning and Malice of its Heathen Perſecutors. Were the Seed of *Abraham* few, when they firſt came to ſojourn in *Ægypt?* no more than *ſeventy*

Exod. i. 7.

Ib. ver. 12.

ſeventy Souls? The Number of the firſt Diſciples of *Chriſt*, on the Day of Pentecoſt, when his Goſpel began to be propagated, was not much greater. Did the ſeveral Kings of *Ægypt* keep a jealous Eye over the Children of *Iſrael*, and take all manner of unjuſt and cruel Methods to prevent their Increaſe? Juſt ſo fared it with the earlieſt Profeſſors of the Goſpel; the Rulers of the World harraſſed and oppreſſed them, and did what they could to cruſh Chriſtianity, in its firſt Seeds, by ſevere Edicts and Penalties, and ſubtle Contrivances. Did the *Iſraelites* thrive nevertheleſs, and multiply exceedingly; ſo as, in the Space of four Hundred and thirty Years, from the Time of the Covenant made with *Abraham*, to come out of *Ægypt* above ſix hundred thouſand *ſtrong*, *that were Men from twenty Years old and upwards*, beſides Women and Children, and a *mixed Multitude*, not ranked into diſtinct Tribes and Families, that were without Number? The Increaſe of Chriſtian Converts was yet more wonderful; and attended with this remark-

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. remarkable Circumſtance of Reſemblance, that it came to its utmoſt Pitch, near the ſame Period of Time, to wit, about four hundred and thirty Years after our Saviour had begun to preach and to ſay, *Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.* Such a ſtrict Correſpondence there was between theſe Events, that we may juſtly reckon the one of them as deſigned to prefigure and typify the other. Eſpecially, ſince the Promiſe made to *Abraham*, about the Fertility of his Deſcendants, was ſo worded by God, as at once to include the Increaſe of his *Natural* and *Spiritual* Seed, and plainly to point out that Acceſs of Converts from all Nations to the Church, which ſhould happen in the Days of the *Meſſiah*. *In bleſſing I will bleſs thee*, ſaid God, *and in multiplying I will multiply thy Seed, as the Stars of the Heaven, and as the Sand which is upon the Sea-ſhore. And in thy Seed (i. e.* in *Chriſt*, the promiſed Seed) *ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* God begins, we ſee, with the Aſſurance of a Temporal Bleſſing,

ing, a numerous Off-ſpring, according to the Fleſh, and ends with the future Enlargement of the Spiritual Kingdom of *Chriſt*; the former of theſe being indeed a Figure only, or myſtical Emblem of the latter, to which this Divine Promiſe chiefly referred, and in which it was finally and fully accompliſhed. *For the Scripture, foreſeeing that God would juſtify the Heathen through Faith, preached before the Goſpel unto* Abraham, *ſaying, In Thee ſhall all Nations be bleſſed.* The ſame Promiſe was afterwards expreſſly renewed to *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, but to none other of the ſucceeding Patriarchs: And from *theſe* alone, therefore God took his *Title*, and vouchſafed to be called the God of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*; becauſe to *theſe* alone he had made the Promiſe of that *Seed, in whom all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed*, by being ingrafted into his Church, and becoming the Subjects of his Spiritual Kingdom.

SERM. IV.

Gal. iii. 8

Gen. xxvi. 4. xxviii. 14.

Many

SERM. IV.

Many Predictions of the ſame Kind are to be met with in the *Pſalms*, and the *Prophets*; particularly in *Iſaiah*; his lxth Chapter is nothing elſe but a Deſcription of the glorious State of the Chriſtian Church, upon the abundant Acceſs of the *Gentiles*: And he cloſes that Prophecy as we have heard, with the *Text*, which in few Words compriſes the ſmall Appearance the Goſpel ſhould make at firſt, the vaſt Increaſe it ſhould afterwards receive, and the ſpeedy Manner in which it ſhould take place: *A little one ſhall become a Thouſand, and a ſmall one a great Nation; I the Lord will haſten it in His Time:* In the *Meſſiah's* time this great Event ſhall come to paſs; and, when it begins, it ſhall be *haſtened*; it ſhall proceed with an aſtoniſhing and irreſiſtible Swiftneſs, until it be fulfilled.

If then then the victorious Progreſs of the Chriſtian Faith be in itſelf a ſufficient Evidence of its Divine Original; that Argument muſt needs be ſomewhat heightened and improved, by conſidering, that the Spirit of Prophecy had long before

ſignifyed

ſignifyed and promiſed this Succeſs: For from the ſame Spirit, from which the Prophecy came, the Completion of it afterwards proceeded. I add, SERM. IV.

3*dly*. That the Advantage peculiar in this Reſpect to Chriſtianity, doth from hence alſo appear, in that the wondrous Succeſs of the Goſpel confirms the *Truth* of thoſe *Miracles*, by which it is ſaid to have been planted, and frees the Account of them from all poſſible Suſpicion of Miſtake, or Impoſture.

The only Way that Infidelity hath left to eſcape the Force of the Argument drawn from Miracles, is, by denying the Truth of the Facts. How unreaſonable and abſurd a Plea this is, may be ſhewn many Ways, particularly from hence: That they, who deny the Credibility of the Goſpel-Miracles, muſt allow ſome-what elſe, altogether as incredible; to wit, that the Goſpel was propagated into all the Regions, and ſubdued all the Religions of the World, without Miracles, which, conſidering the Meanneſs and Incompetency of the Inſtruments, that wrought this Effect,

SERM. IV. is itſelf a Miracle, and the greateſt of Miracles*.

In vain, therefore, do ſome Men reject the Account of the Miracles done by the Apoſtles, if they admit (and they cannot but admit) the Account of the extenſive and ſwift Propagation of the Goſpel by the Apoſtles Means; for the one of theſe Accounts evidently confirms and eſtabliſhes the other. The very Exiſtence of the World is a Proof, that it was at firſt miraculouſly created; and ſo even the Exiſtence of the Chriſtian Religion (as at preſent ſpread and profeſſed in the World) is a Proof, that it was at firſt miraculouſly planted. For the ſecond Creation by *Chriſt Jeſus*, can no more be accounted for by Natural Cauſes, than the firſt; and carries in it

* Πῶς, εἰ μὴ σημεῖα ἐποίουν, ἐπιστεύθη; εἰ μὲν ἐποίουν, θεοῦ δύναμις ἦν· εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐποίουν, τὸ ἐναντίον, πολὺ θαυμαστότερον ἦν τὸ συμβάν. Chryſ. in 1 Cor. cap. i. Ὅταν λέγωσι μὴ γενέσθαι σημεῖα, μειζόνως ἑαυτοὺς περιπείρουσι· τοῦτο γὰρ μέγιστον σημεῖον, τὸ, χωρὶς σημείων, τὴν οἰκουμένην προσδραμεῖν ἅπασαν, ὑπὸ δώδεκα πλωχῶν καὶ ἀγραμμάτων ἀνθρώπων ἁλιευθεῖσαν. Id. in Act. cap. i.

as evident Marks and Impreſſions of an Omnipotent Power. SERM. IV.

Now this is ſuch a Proof of the Reality of the Apoſtles Miracles, as is wanting to thoſe wrought for the Eſtabliſhment of the Law of *Moſes*; the Authority of which ſtands ſolely on the Authority of external Teſtimony, and the Traditional Belief of the Jewiſh Nation; but we have no internal Evidence of their Truth from the Nature and Reaſon of the Event. This way of Proof is particular to the Goſpel-Miracles; the Account of which comes to us, not merely as Matter of Hiſtorical Truth, but as in itſelf demonſtratively certain; becauſe Miracles were neceſſary towards diffuſing the Goſpel in that ſpeedy and effectual Manner, wherein it is confeſſed to have been propagated. And, where an End cannot be obtained, without particular Means, the viſible Accompliſhment of the End is a ſure Proof that thoſe Means muſt have been employed, which were neceſſary towards attaining it. The Jewiſh Worſhip might *poſſibly* have been erected by *Moſes* in

SERM. IV. *Canaan*, though he had wrought no one Miracle to confirm it. The Chriſtian Faith could not *poſſibly* have taken Place in all the World, unleſs Miracles had made way for it: And the Truth, therefore, of the Goſpel-Miracles, is doubly certain to us; both from the Authority of Teſtimony, and from the Reaſon of the Thing; which gives a mighty Advantage to them over thoſe of *Moſes*, and cuts off all poſſible Occaſions and Pretences of Diſtruſt from the Infidel, and the Gainſayer.

Thus much to ſhew, "How great "and how diſtinguiſhng an Advantage "it is to the Chriſtian Inſtitution, to "have been propagated after ſo ſwift and "unaccountable a Manner, as we find "it was." It remains, that I ſhould ſhew likewiſe,

"To what uſeful Ends and Purpoſes "This Conſideration may be applyed."

Three Things there are, which we may plainly learn from it. For it enables us to give a clear Account,

1. Why

1. Why the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* and the utter Extermination of the *Jews* was delayed till forty Years after the Death of our Saviour. SERM. IV.

2. Why Miracles ceaſed ſo ſoon in the Chriſtian Church, when they were continued ſo long in that of the *Jews*, even ſo long at leaſt as their firſt Temple laſted.

3. Why God did not ſuffer Human Learning, or the civil Power to come in to the Support of Chriſtianity; the one, till above a hundred, the other, till three hundred Years after our Saviour. And,

1. We may ſatisfy ourſelves, why the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and the utter Extermination of the *Jewiſh* State, was delayed till forty Years after the Death of *Chriſt*.

One would think that the *Jews* had completely filled up the Meaſure of their Iniquities, when they ſpilt the Blood of *Chriſt*, and made themſelves in the moſt ſolemn Manner anſwerable for the Guilt of it; and that they were even Then grown ripe for Divine Vengeance. But

SERM. IV.

our Saviour having Prayed on the Croſs for his Murtherers, the Merit of that Blood which they ſpilt prevailed with God to reſpite their Puniſhment for ſome time, and to leave them ſtill further Room for Repentance. The Apoſtles, therefore, by an expreſs Order of our Lord, as an Ancient Tradition informs us, tarried in *Judea*, and the neighbouring Countries, *Twelve* Years after his Aſcent; Preaching the *Goſpel of Reconciliation* to the *Jews*, and exhorting them to *Repent, and be baptized, every one of them, in the Name of* Jeſus, *for the Remiſſion of their Sins:* Particularly of that great Sin they had committed in *Crucifying the Lord of Life*; which is mentioned, not only in the *Firſt*, but in all the ſeveral Sermons Preached to them by St. *Peter*, St. *Stephen*, and St. *Paul*, whereof an Account is preſerved to us in the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*. Theſe Applications proving fruitleſs, and the Twelve Years expiring, God commanded the Diſciples to execute their Commiſſion in its utmoſt extent, and to go *Teach and baptize all Nations*, that the Faith

Faith of the *Gentiles* might be a Reproach to the *Jewiſh* Infidelity. And ſo indeed it was. For nothing could better illuſtrate the Infinite Goodneſs of God, and the incorrigible Perverſeneſs of that People, than to obſerve, that the reſt of the World flocked in to the Obedience of *Chriſt*, as ſoon as the Apoſtles erected the Standard of the Croſs, while the *Jews* ſtill ſtood out Obſtinate and Impenitent: The reſt of the World, I ſay, who had neither ſo immediate an Intereſt in the *Meſſiah* as They, nor were ſo capable of diſcerning his Character, and the Time of his coming; nor had any Share in the Guilt of ſpilling his Blood, which might excite them the more eagerly to lay hold of the Goſpel-Pardon. Within leſs than *thirty* Years, after the *Apoſtles* ſet out from *Jewry*, they made Proſelytes every where; *Their Sound went into all the Earth, and their words unto the Ends of the World.* And now, therefore, God's Mercy to the Seed of *Abraham*, being manifeſted in the moſt conſpicuous manner, and their Infidelity being heightened by

SERM. IV.

Rom. x. 18.

SERM. IV. all poſſible Circumſtances of Aggravation, He inflicted the Sentence of Exciſion, which he had before pronounced; but which could not be executed, till the Church of the *Gentiles*, which was to ſucceed that of the *Jews*, had taken ſufficient Root in the World. *Haſte thee* (ſaid the deſtroying Angel to *Lot*) *eſcape to* Zoar, *for I cannot do any thing* [*i. e.* cannot execute my Commiſſion againſt *Sodom*] *till thou be come thither*. And, in like manner, may the Spirit ſeem to have quickened the Induſtry of the *Apoſtles*, by ſaying, "Haſte Ye, ſpread the Doctrine "of *Chriſt* every where; for, till that be "done, I cannot pour out my Fury on "*Jeruſalem*." Thus had our Lord himſelf, a little before his Paſſion, declared, *This Goſpel of the Kingdom ſhall be Preached in all the World, for a Witneſs unto all Nations; and then ſhall the End come*; that is, the *End* of the *Jewiſh* Polity, and of the whole *Moſaic* Diſpenſation.

Gen. xix. 22.

Matt. xxiv. 14.

A 2*d* Thing, we may learn from the ſwift manner in which the Goſpel was propagated,

propagated, is, to give ourſelves from thence an Account, why Miracles ceaſed ſo ſoon in the Chriſtian Church, when they were continued ſo long in that of the *Jews*, even as long at leaſt as their firſt Temple ſtood. SERM. IV.

The great Uſe of Miracles was, to confirm the Truth, and promote the Reception of the Goſpel, at its firſt ſetting out. That Uſe ceaſing, Miracles likewiſe ceaſed; being gradually, and, in about an Age after the Aſcent of *Chriſt*, almoſt totally withdrawn. For what St. *Paul* ſays expreſſly of *Tongues*, holds equally true of all other Supernatural Gifts and Powers, indulged to the firſt Promulgers of Chriſtianity; they were *Signs to thoſe who believed not, not to thoſe who believed.*

Indeed, ſince the *Jewiſh* Diſpenſation had received its Authority entirely from Miracles, it could not, without more and greater Miracles, be aboliſhed. Since the Kindom of Satan, and the Idolatrous Worſhip of the Heathen Gods, had been erected upon *falſe* and *lying* Wonders,

SERM. IV. *true* ones were neceſſary to overthrow it. But, as ſoon as the Croſs of *Chriſt* had every where triumphed in ſome Meaſure over *Judaiſm* and *Paganiſm*; there was no need of a continued Series of Miracles, to complete the Conqueſt, or to confirm the Faith of thoſe who embraced Chriſtianity. The manifeſt Reaſonableneſs and Excellence of its Precepts, were of themſelves ſufficient to make it flouriſh ſtill more and more, and baffle all remaining Oppoſition. Eſpecially, ſince thoſe, who were to live at the greateſt Diſtance from the Miracles done in the Infancy of the Goſpel, might be as clearly ſatisfied of the Truth of them, as if they themſelves had actually ſeen them; partly from the Evangelic Writings received early in all Chriſtian Churches; and, partly, from the Reaſon and Nature of the Thing itſelf; it being (as I have already ſhewn) altogether impoſſible, that, without Miracles, ſuch a Degree of Succeſs ſhould have attended the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel.

But now, as to the Law of *Moſes*, the Caſe was quite otherwiſe: For, though it

it was uſhered in by Miracles, yet thoſe Miracles being performed in the Deſart, without any Witneſſes but what were of that Nation; and before a Race of Men that were extinct, ere the *Jewiſh* Worſhip was erected in *Canaan*; and the Account of thoſe Miracles being contained in a Book, which was all along kept ſecret from the reſt of the World; Infidelity found ſome Room, or Colour to ſuſpect the Truth of them: Nor could it neceſſarily be inferred from that degree of Succeſs which the *Jewiſh* Religion met with, that it *muſt* have ſprung originally from Miracles. The whole of that Religion conſiſted in Ceremonious *Rites* and *Obſervances*, which had no Intrinſic Goodneſs in them, nor any clear marks or Characters upon them of that Divine Authority by which they were commanded. Their *Typical* Uſe and Reference was little known to the *Jews* themſelves, and could be leſs diſcerned by thoſe who were *Strangers to the Covenant of Promiſes.* In a Word the Law of *Moſes* as diſtinguiſhed from all other Religious

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. Inſtitutions, had nothing in the Frame and Deſign of it, apt either to recommend it to its Profeſſors, or to invite Proſelytes. During ſuch a Ceremonious State, it might be requiſite for God, by frequent Manifeſtations of his Divine Power and Preſence, to keep that backſliding People within the Bounds of their Duty, and procure Reverence to the Worſhip which he had ſet up, from the Idolatrous Nations around them: It might be requiſite, I ſay, that he ſhould, at fit Intervals, own himſelf to be the Author of their Religion, and do New Miracles, to keep up the Credit and Influence of the Old Ones. Miracles, therefore, continued in that Church for many Ages after its firſt Erection: For, beſides thoſe which their ſeveral Prophets occaſionally wrought, the immediate Appearance of God in the *Shechinah*, or Cloud of Glory, and his Anſwers by *Urim* and *Thummim*, were familiar, while the Tabernacle, and firſt Temple laſted; and even many of their *Laws*, (for Inſtance, the *Law* of *Jealouſy*, thoſe for the Attendance

tendance of the *Jews* at their *Three Great Feſtivals*, and for their Reſting in the *Sabbatic Year)* were ſo contrived, as to be Demonſtrative Proofs of the Immediate Interpoſition of God in the Affairs of that People. With good Reaſon, therefore, was a long ſucceſſion of Miracles indulged under that Diſpenſation: Not ſo, under the Goſpel; which, after it was ſufficiently eſtabliſhed, needed not New Signs and Wonders, to preſerve, or promote the Belief of it; its Original Succeſs being, as it were, a perpetual Standing Miracle, of ſufficient Force to evince its Divine Extraction, from the Beginning of Chriſtianity to the End of it. A SERM. IV.

3*d* Uſe, which, I thought, might be made of the Miraculous Manner of Propagating the Goſpel, was, to give ourſelves from thence an Account, Why God did not ſuffer *Human Learning*, or the *Civil Power* to come in to the Support of it; the One till at leaſt an Hundred, the other, till three Hundred Years after our Saviour. The Deſign of this

Part

SERM. IV. Part of the Divine Conduct ſeems to have been, that the Eſtabliſhment of our Faith might appear manifeſtly to be the Immediate Work of Heaven, and not owing to Human Means, or any Set of Natural Cauſes. The Apoſtles themſelves confeſs (and glory in confeſſing) that, as they Preached the Doctrine of *Chriſt* in the moſt ſimple, artleſs manner; not with *Excellency of Speech*, or *the Enticing Words of Man's Wiſdom*; ſo the firſt Converts, whom their Labours brought over to the Faith, were generally mean Perſons of no acquired Knowledge, no Rank, no Education. For, *Not many Wiſe Men after the Fleſh, not many Mighty, not many Noble were called; but God choſe the Fooliſh Things of the World, to confound the Wiſe; and the Weak things of the World, to confound the things which were Mighty; and the Baſe things of the World, and the things which were deſpiſed did he chuſe; yea, and the things which were not,* (ſuch is the Leſſening Phraſe of St. *Paul*) *to bring to Nought the things which were.* The Reaſon of which *Choice*

1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28.

is

is plainly ſet down in the following Words: SERM. IV.
That no Fleſh might glory in his Preſence: He would have no Rivals, no Sharers in the Glory of this Event; and therefore, produced it in ſuch a manner, and by ſuch unproportioned Means, as to make it impoſſible for conſidering Men to miſtake the true Author; ſo, as that all, who looked on, ſhould be ready to cry out, *This is thy Hand, and thou, Lord, haſt done it.* Pſ. cix. 27.

Indeed it was, on more Accounts than one, requiſite, that Human Learning ſhould not be admitted into the Chriſtian Church, till it was ſufficiently ſpread and ſettled. For, though the Uſe of Learning might, from the Beginning, have been great, in order to confound the vain Sophiſtry, and wild Superſtition of the *Greeks*, and to vindicate the Doctrine of *Chriſt* againſt all their Objections: yet great Inconveniencies might alſo have redounded to the Faith by the Means of it. For it muſt be confeſſed, that, when Philoſophers in After-times embraced our Religion, they blended it often with the peculiar Notions of

SERM. IV.

of thoſe Sects in which they had been educated, and by that means corrupted the Purity and Simplicity of the Chriſtian Doctrine. Had this happened from the Beginning, ſuch an Early Mixture of Philoſophy with Chriſtianity would have bid fair for an Univerſal Reception in ſucceeding Ages. But the Goſpel being firſt, for an Age and more, purely and ſimply profeſſed, there was no great Danger of its ſuffering from the Subtleties and Refinements of Philoſophy afterwards; becauſe every Chriſtian was then able to compare them with, and try them by, the plain Primitive Rule of Faith, received till that Time in all Churches; and might ſecurely reject, or admit them, upon ſuch a Compariſon.

For theſe Reaſons, the Learned and Wiſe of this World ſeem to have been overlooked by God in the firſt Plantation of the Goſpel; that neither its Succeſs might be imputed to their Skill and Aſſiſtance, nor its Doctrine run the riſque of being blended early with their particular Opinions. However, ſtill we may

may obſerve, that the Admiſſion of *Learning* was long before the Admiſſion of the *Civil Power*; becauſe the former having leſs Force and Influence than the latter towards procuring the Eſtabliſhment of the Goſpel, was, conſequently, leſs liable to be ſuſpected as the Cauſe of it. Let me add alſo, that, as the Powers of this World would have been mightier Inſtruments of advancing Chriſtianity, than Human Learning could be, ſo would they have been more able, and more likely to corrupt it, and enervate the Force of it; as we find, that, not long after their coming into the Chriſtian Church, they actually did: And therefore, on this Account likewiſe was their Admiſſion longer poſtponed. For near three hundred Years after Chriſt, no *Roman* Emperor embraced the Faith; though they were (ſeveral of them) Men of great moral Virtues, and *not far from the Kingdom of God*, as to their Perſonal Qualifications and Characters. Such, particularly, were *Veſpaſian*, *Titus*, *Trajan*, *Adrian*, and the two *Antonines*. Yet it pleaſed

SERM. IV. pleaſed the Divine Providence, that even theſe good Emperors, inſtead of embracing, and protecting the Chriſtian Faith, ſhould diſcourage and perſecute it; that ſo the *Kingdom of Chriſt*, which was *not of this World*, might not be beholden to any of the Kingdoms of this World for its Eſtabliſhment; but ſpread and fix itſelf every where, not only without the Aid of Princes, but againſt their Will; in ſpite of their fierceſt Oppoſition, nay, even by the *Means* of it. *The Kings of the Earth, and the Rulers took Counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his Anointed. He that ſat in the Heavens laughed them to ſcorn, the Lord had them in Deriſion. He ſet his King upon his holy Hill of Sion*, firſt; and then, *gave him the Heathen for his Inheritance, and the uttermoſt Parts of the Earth for his Poſſeſſion.* *Herod* and *Pontius Pilate* began this Oppoſition (for thus hath St. *Peter* expreſſly applied the Prophecy) and the *Roman* Emperors, till *Conſtantine*, continued it. Nevertheleſs, the Word of God went on, conquering to conquer; till it had ſubdued

Pſ. ii. 2. 4, 6, 8.

Acts iv. 27.

dued even theſe Subduers of the World to the Obedience of the Faith, and brought them to *caſt their Crowns before the Throne* of the Lamb, and to acknowledge, that *the Fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than Men, and the Weakneſs of God is ſtronger than Men*, even than the ſtrongeſt and the higheſt among the Sons of Men. There was then a Chriſtian Church, long before there were any Chriſtian Princes; She did not grow up under their Shadow, but received them into Her Boſom: And, as ſhe ſubſiſted for ſeveral Centuries, ere the Civil Power came in to her, ſo will ſhe endure for endleſs Ages, when the Civil Power ſhall be no more; and even now, when ſhe receives Protection and Encouragement from it, yet is She in all the chief Functions and Operations of the Miniſters of her Spiritual Kingdom, independent upon it. Thus did God order things, on purpoſe, that the Diſtinction of theſe ſeveral Societies, Offices, and Powers might be evident; and perpetually without Encroachment or Confuſion, preſerved: And, *let no Man join together*

SERM. IV.

Rev. iv. 10. 1 Cor. i. 25.

SERM. IV. *what God hath thus put aſunder!* It remains that I ſhould, under my

V. Fifth and laſt General Head, briefly inquire into the Time when, and the Manner how this Miracle ceaſed, and make ſuitable Reflexions upon it, with regard both to thoſe who lived then, when this Check was given to the Goſpel, and to Us, who live now in the Latter Ages of the World.

The plain Anſwer to the Enquiry propoſed, is, That the Miracle ceaſed, when the Civil Power began to declare openly in Behalf of Chriſtianity; that is, ſoon after *Conſtantine* came to the Throne. For it was no longer a Wonder, that our Religion ſhould thrive and flouriſh, when, inſtead of bitter Perſecutions, it met with all manner of Encouragements. For a Century after *Conſtantine*, and upwards, the Number of Chriſtians multiplied exceedingly in all the Parts of the World in which it had already been planted, and to which the Empire of the *Romans*, or their Influence, did extend. For above a Cen-

a Century after that, Chriſtianity ſeems to have been at a Stand; neither gaining much Ground, nor loſing much, unleſs only in the Lives of its lukewarm Profeſſors. But then it declined apace every Day; Diſſenſions among Chriſtians grew hot, and their Zeal for Religion waxed cold. The great Honours and Endowments, which Religious Princes had beſtowed on the Church, did too often occaſion Ambition and Luxury in thoſe who contended for them, or poſſeſſed them. In a Word, all the Vices of Proſperity abounded, together with the Advantages of it: So that the Name of Chriſtianity was no longer Venerable in the Eyes of Men; and its holy Doctrine, not producing an anſwerable Sanctity of Life, made no further Impreſſions upon them. This unhappy Opportunity *Mahomet* laid hold of, to ſet up his Religion; which, being (as I have ſaid) ſuited to the Voluptuous Manners of the Eaſt, and ſeconded by the Power of the Sword, made large Inroads into Chriſtendom, and tore away entire Provinces at once

SERM. IV.

SERM. IV.

from the Profeſſion of the Goſpel. Since that time, Chriſtianity ſeems to have been almoſt in a continual Decay: *The Hedges of this Vineyard of God being broken down, all they that went by, plucked off her Grapes: The Wild-Boar of the Wood did root it up, and the Wild Beaſt out of the Field did devour it*; till a Diſcovery of ſome unknown Parts of the World opened a new Way for enlarging the Bounds of Chriſt's Kingdom. The Zeal of ſome Devout Men (though mixed often with Private Intereſts and Deſigns) ſtirred them up to make uſe of this Advantage, and to Publiſh the Goſpel of Chriſt in the remoteſt Corners of the Eaſt, whither, it is probable, none of the Apoſtles ever came. There alſo Chriſtianity (a corrupt and ſuperſtitious Chriſtianity) hath gotten footing. How long it may continue, and how far it may advance, is known to Him alone, *who hath determined the Times before appointed*, to Religions as well as Nations, *and the Bounds of their Habitation*. I ſhall not preſume to enquire into it; but ſhall raiſe an

Pſal. lxxx. 12, 13.

Acts xvii. 26.

an Uſeful Reflexion or two from what hath been obſerved on this Head, and with a ſhort Application of it to our Selves, ſhall conclude this Diſcourſe. SERM. IV.

The Imperfect Propagation of the Goſpel, and the Prevalence of *Mahometiſm* * over it, are ſome of the darkeſt Secrets of Divine Providence. But the Cauſes that contributed to produce this great Revolution are manifeſt: they were plainly the Vices and Diſcords of the Chriſtians of thoſe Times, that gave the Enemies of our Faith Courage to attack it, put Weapons into their Hands, and furniſhed them with all manner of Advantages againſt it. *Chriſt* came into the World on purpoſe to ſubdue the Power, and deſtroy the Kingdom of *Satan*. He

* Nulli unquam genti tam latè regnatum fuit, neque tam brevi temporis Spatio unquam tot regna, tot regiones, ſub jugum miſſa. Incredibile dictu veriſſimum tamen eſt, octoginta aut non multo plurium annorum ſpatio, ſubjugarunt illi, & Diabolico *Muhammedis* Imperio acquiſiverunt, Palæſtinam, Syriam, Armeniam utramque, totam fermè Aſiam minorem, Perſiam, Indiam, Ægyptum, Numidiam, Barbariam totam ad Nigrum uſque fluvium, Luſitanium, Hiſpaniam Neque hic ſtetit illorum fortuna aut ambitio, donec & Italiæ magnam quoque partem adjecerint, ad portas uſque urbis Romæ; quinetiam Siciliam, Candiam, Cyprum, & reliquas maris Mediterranei inſulas. *Mede, Comm. Apoc. Lib.* iii *Tuba* 5. *p.* 468.

SERM. IV. diſplayed the Banner of his Croſs, and ſummoned all Nations to repair to it; who accordingly obeyed the Signal. But while the Extremeſt Parts of the Earth were meditating a Submiſſion, while his greateſt Enemies were haſtening to put their Necks under his Feet, a Stop was put to their Intentions, and his Triumphs, by the Mutinies and Deſertions of his own Soldiers. Who can ſufficiently deplore the Guilt, and deteſt the Ill Influence of thoſe Vices, which cut off ſo many Kingdoms at once from the Empire of *Chriſt?* not only arreſted his Doctrine in its full Courſe, and ſaid to it, *Hither ſhalt thou come, and no farther*; but made the Sun of Righteouſneſs *go backward*, as it were, *ten Degrees*, and leave many Countries under groſs Darkneſs, which had once been enlightened with the ſaving Truths of the Goſpel? Certainly, Spiritual Faction and Pride, and Uncharitable Breaches of Chriſtian Unity and Peace, are not ſuch ſlight Offences as ſome Men are willing to think them; ſince it was owing in great meaſure to Theſe, that the Univerſal Reign

Reign of *Chriſt* upon Earth was then hindered, and the Accompliſhment of the Prophecies in that reſpect deferred to diſtant Ages. SERM. IV.

Many Princes ſince, indiſcreetly Pious, have made Attempts to regain the Ground, Chriſtianity loſt, by the Force of their Arms, and to plant the Faith anew in thoſe Places, where it once had Poſſeſſion, by the Points of their Swords. But (alas!) that great Work is to be accomplished, not by ſuch *Holy Wars* as theſe; but by Conflicts of another kind, which we muſt mantain with our own Corrupt Habits, and Vicious Inclinations; not by Foreign Acquiſitions, but Domeſtick Victories over thoſe Impieties of Chriſtians, which gave the great Enemy of our Faith his firſt Advantages againſt it: For though the *Kingdom of Heaven ſuffer Violence, and the Violent take it by Force*; yet *the Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal, but Spiritual.* When the Converſions of thoſe that name the Name of *Chriſt*, become agreeable to the Purity of his Doctrine; when the Diviſions of *Chriſtendom* are healed, and the Profeſſors of our Ho-

Math. xi. 12. 2 Cor. x. 4.

SERM. IV.

ly Faith live together every where like Men of one Mind, in one Houſe; then ſhall the Sceptre of *Chriſt's* Kingdom extend itſelf to all the unconverted Parts of the Earth, and not ſooner.

That God, ere the Day of final Doom, will bring this about, the Scripture ſeems to ſay: but of the particular Time, at which he will effect it, we know no more, than of That, in which he will come to Judgment. However, let us All, as far as lies in our Power, contribute to this Great Event, and prepare the Way for it. None of Us, I think, are now obliged to enter upon the *Miſſion*, and ſacrifice our Lives, in order to ſpread the Goſpel among *Mahometans* and *Heathens*: I ſay, None of us, I think, are now *obliged* to it, as not being armed with the Power of *Miracles*, requiſite for ſuch an Attempt. However, without hazarding our Lives, much may be done by us, both at Home and Abroad, towards encouraging and promoting ſo good a Work. And let us not blame, much leſs deride thoſe Good Men (though of another Communion) whoſe honeſt Zeal

hath

hath carried them yet further, Let us rather mention with Honour the Names of as many of them, as we can reaſonably ſuppoſe to have been led into this Deſign by ſincere Motives of advancing the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, without aiming at By-Ends, or any Temporal Advantages; and let us wiſh, that the Reformation had not undergone juſt Reproaches for its Backwardneſs to promote ſo glorious an Enterpriſe: an Omiſſion, not eaſily to be excuſed in ſuch Proteſtant Nations, as have greatly enlarged their Traffick and Wealth by the Productions of thoſe Countries, wherein many poor Ignorant Savages dwell, who want only to be inſtructed in the ſaving Knowledge of *Chriſt*, in order to embrace it. But, *how ſhall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how ſhall they hear, without a Preacher?* It might juſtly be expected, that Thoſe, who *had been Partakers of the Carnal Things of* theſe *Gentiles*, ſhould have *miniſtred unto them in Spiritual Things*; that, after enriching themſelves by the Spoils of thoſe

SERM. IV.

Rom. xii. 14.

SERM. IV. those Provinces (which I know not what Right they had to invade, and conquer) they ſhould at leaſt have made that charitable Return of planting the Goſpel among them; a Work, of greater Importance and Service to the Publick than all their other *Plantations.*

But this is a Reflexion, in which, perhaps few, if any, that hear me, are concerned. To conclude, therefore, Let every One of us, in our ſeveral Places and Stations, do our beſt to promote the Kingdom of *Chriſt* within us, by promoting the Love and Practice of Evangelical Purity and Holineſs; and let us likewiſe frequently put up our moſt ardent Requeſts for the Enlargement of his Viſible Adminiſtration without us; *beſeeching* God, in the Words of our Church, that he would *pleaſe, of his Gracious Goodneſs, ſhortly to accompliſh the Number of his Elect, and to haſten the Kingdom of his Dear Son.*

To Him, with the Father, &c.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN,

AT

WHITE-HALL,

October 28, 1694.

PROV. xiv. 6.

A Scorner ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not.

IT is the Wiſeſt among the Children of Men, who ſpeaks; and about that which moſt nearly concerns Us; and He beſt underſtood, even the Method of attaining True Wiſdom: It becomes us, therefore, SERM. V.

SERM. V. therefore, to give the moſt fixed and ſerious Attention, we can, to what he is ſaying.

A Scorner, ſaith he, *ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not.* Where we are, firſt, to enquire, Who it is, that is repreſented to us, under the Character of *a Scorner*; and, then, in what Senſe he is ſaid to *ſeek Wiſdom*, but *not to find it.*

The *Scorner* is One, who is frequently mentioned in this Book of *Proverbs*; and againſt whom the Author of it has levelled no ſmall Number of his Apophthegms, and wiſe Sayings. We find in the *Pſalms* and *Prophetick* Writings alſo, many Glances at him, many Complaints of him; ſo that the Nation of the *Jews* did, it ſeems, abound mightily with this Sort of Men; and they were a Great and Particular Grievance to the Followers of True Piety and Wiſdom.

Their Character ſeems, in ſhort, to have been This. They were Men, that, with much ado, had made a ſhift to get rid of Good Principles, and ſuch ſtiff Opinions, as they found inconſiſtent with a Looſe

a Looſe Practice. As they had not any Religion themſelves, ſo their Way was to deſpiſe Thoſe who had; to look down with Pity and Contempt upon a poor deluded Under-World; Beaſts of Burthen that followed in a Track, after their Leaders; Slaves to received Rules and Precarious Opinions, to Fooliſh Empty Forms and Obſervances; but who never once reaſoned freely, or thought for Themſelves. They were unfortunately fallen into a Time, when frequent Commotions happened in the *Jewiſh* State (as the Caſe remarkably was, in the Age before *Solomon* came to the Throne) and had ſeen ſeveral Sorts of Men uppermoſt, and, conſequently, ſeveral Notions of things prevailing by Turns. This contributed mightily to unſettle their Thoughts or (as they called it doubtleſs) to *enlarge* them; to create in them a ſlight Opinion of the Eternal Differences of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil; and to make them laugh at Thoſe, who were eager on any Side, or for any Cauſe whatſoever, which they did not get by. SERM. V.

They

SERM. V.

They evidently ſaw that Some, who ſat up for greater Purity, and a Demurer Shew, and Face of Religion than their Neighbours, were really Counterfeits, and meant nothing, at the bottom, but Their own Intereſt. And they wiſely reſolved, upon this, that all Religion was, like Theirs, a Convenient Trick and Pretence only; invented by cunning Men to keep ſilly People in awe, to make Princes reign ſafely, and the Prieſthood live eaſily. But as for Them, they knew better things than to fall in with the Herd, and to give themſelves up to be ridden by the Tribe of *Levi*; the Pooreſt and moſt Contemptible Tribe of the Twelve, which had no Lot, no Inheritance among their Brethren; but lived upon the Cheat of Sacrifices and Offerings, and upon driving a Gainful Traffick for the Good Things of This World, here paid down to them, by promiſing and preaching up to Thoſe they dealt with, a Recompence in a World to come.

Nor

Nor were theſe Men content to enjoy this Secret, which they had thus found out, quietly among themſelves; but ſet up openly for Proſelytes, and a Party; for running down all Religion, and for laughing Piety and Virtue out of Countenance: So that a Good and Honeſt Man was ſure to be their Mark, whereſoever they found him; and they were ever *ſhooting their Arrows* againſt him, *even bitter Words.* And this was come to that paſs, that the True Servants of God did almoſt ſink under the Affliction; and did make it matter of Publick Requeſt to God in the Solemn Service of the Church, to be freed from it: — *Have mercy upon us, O Lord,* ſaid They, *have mercy upon us, for we are exceedingly filled with Contempt. Our Soul is exceedingly filled with the Scorning of Thoſe that are at Eaſe, and with the Contempt of the Proud.*

SERM. V.

Pſal. lxiv. 3.

Pſal. cxiii. 3, 4.

This is, in ſome meaſure, the Character of that Man, who, in the Language of the Text, is called a *Scorner*; and You ſee now, in what Senſe he is ſaid to *ſeek Wiſdom*

SERM. V.

Wiſdom; but *not to find it.* For the meaning of theſe Expreſſions is plainly this That he pretends to know more, and to ſee further, than the reſt of Mankind; to have made freer Enquiries after Truth and to have ſhaken off the Prejudices of Education more throughly: He ſets up for examining things to the bottom, without taking them upon Truſt, or relying on the Authority of any Man. What God is pretended to have ſaid in the Holy Writings, what wiſe and good Men have ſaid in all Ages, and Countries of the World, he is not much concerned to know. To the *Oracles of Right Reaſon he goes* (by Right Reaſon always meaning his Own) and from thence he enquires what he is to think, and to do; raiſes ſome fanciful Scheme of things to himſelf, frames ſome particular Set of Opinions; and then rejoices in the mighty Diſcovery he hath made, and wonders at the reſt of the World, that they do not fall in with it, and adore it. Now theſe Pretences, the Wiſe-Man tells us, are vain, and theſe Searches are vain; he

he hath taken a great deal of Pains, only to be out of the Way, and to miſs the Mark which he aims at: *A Scorner ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not.* SERM. V.

Having thus largely opened the Senſe of the Text, I ſhall endeavour, in what follows, to juſtify the Truth of the Obſervation contained in it, by ſhewing you, how it comes to paſs, that the Men, who thus ſet up for a more than an ordinary pitch of Wiſdom and Senſe, by Contemning Religion, and deriding the Profeſſors of it, do always, and muſt always, fail of the End which they propoſe to themſelves; ſince, whatever Abilities they may have in Other Matters, yet they are the moſt unqualified and incapable, of all Men, to make impartial Enquiries after Divine Truth, and to diſcern between That and Error.

There are *Four* things, which particularly unfit a Man for ſuch a Taſk, a very *Proud*, or a very *Suſpicious* Temper; *Falſe Wit*, or *Senſuality*. And Theſe are the chief and prevailing Ingredients in the Compoſition of that Man, whom

SERM. V. we call a *Scorner*. The Two laſt do generally, and in moſt Inſtances, belong to him: But the Two Firſt are Eſſential to him, and inſeparable from him.

Pride is that Ruling Quality which, of all others, ſeems to take the faſteſt Hold of him; *Proud and Haughty* Scorner is his *Name*, ſays *Solomon* elſewhere. And again, *There is a Generation, O how loſty are their Eyes! and their Eyelids lifted up!* The Truth is, there never was, nor ever can be a ſettled Contempt of Religious Principles, that is not built upon *Pride*, *i. e.* upon an undue Value, which a Man hath for himſelf, and for his own Opinion, and a Diſregard for every thing beſides: And, therefore, the Author of (that Fantaſtical Book) the *Leviathan*, doth, at the very Entrance of it, very honeſtly, and in Terms confeſs, that he is a Man who *Loves his own Opinions*. And ſo, doubtleſs, doth every Man too, who treads in His Steps, though he doth not own it ſo frankly, or perhaps know it ſo throughly. Indeed a Modeſt Humble Man can hardly bring

Prov. xxi. 24.

Prov. xxx. 13.

bring himſelf once to think of ſhaking off common received Principles, and going againſt the United Wiſdom of Mankind: or, if he ſhould entertain, yet will he never venture to publiſh that Thought; but will conceal it, as carefully as he would his own Boſom Infirmity, or the Secret of his Friend. 'Tis the preſumptuous and proud Man alone, who dares to trample on thoſe Truths, which the reſt of the World reverence; and can ſit down quietly in the Aſſurance, that he alone is in the Right, and all Mankind beſide in the Wrong. SERM. V.

Now, I ſay, as there is no one Quality, that ſticks more cloſely to a Scorner than that of Pride, ſo is there none that doth more evidently obſtruct right Reaſoning, and an impartial Search after Truths of all kinds, eſpecially thoſe which relate to Virtue and Piety. And no wonder therefore, if on this Account the Scorner, though he *ſeek Wiſdom*, yet *findeth it not*. *Pride* makes a Man ſeem ſufficient in his own Eyes, for all manner of Speculations and Enquiries; and, therefore, puts him indifferently upon the Purſuit of all Know-

SERM. V.

ledge, and the Determination of all Doubts, without giving him leave to diſtruſt himſelf in the leaſt, or once to conſider, which way his Genius and Abilities lie. Hence it happens, that the Man, not being duly qualified for every Search, or, if he were, yet not having Leiſure and Opportunity enough to go through with it, is fain to take up with ſlight and ſuperficial Accounts of Things; and then, what he wants in true Knowledge, to make up in downright Aſſurance. As ſoon as he hath touched on any Science, or Study, he immediately ſeems to himſelf to have maſtered it; is as poſitive in his Opinions, and as hardy in his Aſſertions, as if the Thoughts of his whole Life had been directed that Way only: Which is, as if a Coaſter, who had gone from Port to Port only, ſhould pretend to give a better Deſcription of the Inland Parts of a Country, than thoſe who have travelled it all over. But this, I ſay, is the miſchievous Nature of Pride; it makes a Man graſp at every thing, and, by Conſequence, comprehend nothing effectually

and

and throughly; and yet (which is worſt of all) inclines him to deſpiſe and contradict thoſe that do. It gives him juſt enough Underſtanding, to raiſe an Objection or a Doubt; but not enough to lay it: Which, as it is the meaneſt and moſt deſpicable, ſo it is alſo the moſt dangerous State of Mind a Man can be in; and by ſo much the more dangerous, as the Subject, upon which his Enquiries turn, is more important, and the Errors more fatal which he runs into, for want of a due Knowledge of it. He that is but half a Philoſopher, is in danger of being an Atheiſt; an half Phyſician is apt to turn Empiric: an Half-bred Man is conceited in his Addreſs, and troubleſome in his Converſation. Thus it is all Matters of Speculation, or Practice; He that knows but a little of them, and is very confident of his own Strength, is more out of the Way of true Knowledge, than if he knew nothing at all. Now there is, I ſay, a natural Tendency in Pride, towards putting a Man's Mind into ſuch a Situation as this; and, therefore, it muſt needs be a Quality very oppoſite

SERM. V. oppoſite to the Search and Attainment of true Wiſdom.

And then, ſuppoſing a proud Man to be once in the Wrong, it is ſcarce poſſible that he ſhould ever be ſet right again; he is placed above the reach of that great means of Amendment, Reproof; *A Scorner heareth not Rebuke*, ſays *Solomon*: And therefore, as his Pride led him into a Miſtake at firſt, ſo will it be ſure to keep him there; and to harden him in his way, againſt whatever wiſe Men can think or ſay of him.

Prov. xiii. 1.

Thus, I ſay, is Pride an Enemy to the Knowledge of Truth in general; but moſt of all doth it hinder Men from diſcerning Sacred Truth, and the Doctrines of Revealed Religion. A proud Man is very hardly brought to digeſt the humble Duties of the Croſs, or to admit a Belief of the Myſteries of Chriſtianity: The one are too low for him, and he cannot ſtoop to the Practice of them; the other are too high for his Underſtanding, and he deſires to be excuſed from entertaining any Propoſition as true, which he doth

doth not perfectly comprehend. If he cannot give himſelf a certain plain Account, in what Manner, and to what End God did a thing; he wiſely reſolves, that therefore he did it not at all. If he hath not as clear an Idea of every Term in an Article of Faith, as he hath of thoſe in a Mathematical Propoſition; it is preſently unphiloſophical, abſurd, and fooliſh; invented by thoſe, whoſe Intereſt it is to puzzle Mens Underſtandings, that they may have their Wills and Affections at their Service. SERM. V.

And this puts us in mind alſo of that *ſecond great Ingredient* in the Character of a Scorner, which we propoſed to conſider; a ſtrange and unreaſonable Degree of *Suſpicion*, by which he doubts of every thing he hears, and diſtruſts every Man he converſes with; imagines the World to be all Cheat and Impoſture; that there is no Sincerity, no Honeſty any where; but that every Man is continually ſtudying how to put a Trick upon his Neighbour. Without this Temper (it might be eaſily proved, that) a Man cannot bring himſelf

SERM. V. to run down Religion, and the Profeſſors of it; and, with it, it is impoſſible, I think, to arrive at true Wiſdom. Indeed, to be cautious, and upon our Guard, in receiving Doctrines, and not eaſily to give up our Aſſent to every Tale that is told us, is a Point of great Prudence, and very requiſite, in ſuch a Multiplicity of Opinions as there is in the World, to preſerve us from Error. But then, we may carry this Point too far; we may be ſo ſcrupulous and circumſpect in admitting the Teſtimonies of Men, as to reject ſome good Witneſſes among ſeveral bad ones; and to deceive ourſelves oftentimes, for very fear of being deceived by others. A general undiſtinguiſhing Suſpicion is altogether as apt to miſlead a Man, as a too eaſy and unwary Credulity. And to this Exceſs a Scorner is naturally inclined: He is ſo poſſeſſed with the Notion of *Prieſtcraft*, and *Pious Frauds*, as to apply it indifferently to all Religions, and to every thing in Religion: He is ſo afraid of having his Underſtanding impoſed upon, in Matters of Faith, that he ſtands equally aloof from all Propoſitions of

of that Kind, whether true or falſe: Which is, as if a Man ſhould refuſe to receive any Money at all, becauſe there is a great deal goes about that is falſe and counterfeit; or reſolve not to make a Friendſhip or Acquaintance with any Man, becauſe many Men are not to be truſted. Certainly this is a very great Inſtance of Folly; and, in what Breaſt ſoever it harbours, cannot but indiſpoſe a Man extremely for the Study and Attainment of Religious Wiſdom. An Extremity of Suſpicion in an Enquirer after Truth, is like a raging Jealouſy in an Huſband, or a Friend; it leads a Man to turn all his Thoughts towards the ill-natured Side, and to put the worſt Conſtruction upon every thing; and (in Conſequence of that) for once that he is really in the right, in his Gueſſes and Cenſures, to be very often, and very much in the Wrong.

SERM. V.

III. A *Third* Part of the Character of that Man whom we are deſcribing, is, *Falſe Wit*; or a Way of expoſing Things ſacred and ſerious, by paſſing a bold Jeſt upon them,

SERM. V.

them, and ridiculing Arguments, inſtead of confuting them. The very Name of *a Scorner* will tell us, that this is one of his moſt beloved Accompliſhments: And, I am ſure, it is ſuch an one, as can never help a Man to procure right Impreſſions of Things, and will ſcarce ever allow him to improve or preſerve them. Wit indeed, as it implies a certain uncommon Reach and Vivacity of Thought, is an excellent Talent; very fit to be employed in the Search of Truth, and very capable of aſſiſting us to diſcern and embrace it: But in the Way in which the Scorner exerts it, the Way of Satire and prophane Drollery, it betrays a Man into a Thouſand Errors, for one that it diſcovers to him. Men of quick and lively Parts are apt to give themſelves a Looſe beyond plain Reaſon and common Senſe, and to ſay many things not exactly right and true, in order to ſay ſomewhat new and ſurprizing. Their great Aim is, in general, *to pleaſe*; and, in order to it, they muſt bend all their Wit that Way, to which the corrupt Nature of Man is inclined, and be ſure always

ways to ſpeak *againſt* that which is uppermoſt; I mean the Opinions that are moſt general and prevailing. This gives them a light and trifling, inſtead of a ſerious and manly Frame of Spirit; and makes them think, they have anſwered all the wiſeſt Reaſons that can be brought for any thing, if they have but clapped a *Nickname* upon it, and dreſſed up a grave and venerable Truth in ſo odd a Diſguiſe as to raiſe Mirth and Laughter from it. Thus a late Perſon, eminent for Wit and Wickedneſs, till a Death-bed made him more ſerious, and gave him truer Apprehenſions of Things, uſed to pleaſe himſelf mightily with this Thought, that the doing of a *Miracle* was only another Phraſe for the *ſhewing of a Trick*: And having once repreſented the Thing to himſelf under ſuch a light Image, he could hardly be brought to think reverently ever afterwards; or to allow the ſtrongeſt Arguments which could be brought for the Truth of Miracles, a due and impartial Conſideration. And thus alſo the great Leader of the Libertines of this

SERM. V.

SERM. V. this Age (whom we have already had Occaſion to mention) made Sport with the Doctrine of the *Divinity* of Chriſt, by tranſlating, after an abſurd manner, the *Greek* Word Λόγος, (which St. *John* applies to him) and aſſuring us, that That Appellation given to our Saviour, was, in our Tongue, as much as to ſay, the *Verb of God*. And this vain and blaſphemous Criticiſm he thought ſufficient to overthrow a prime Article of the Chriſtian Faith. In the ſame manner he pretended to ridicule the Doctrine of Grace, by enquiring into the meaning of two Words, generally uſed by Divines concerning it, to wit, *Infuſion* and *Inſpiration*; and by informing us, that they ſignified in plain *Engliſh*, *Inpouring* and *Inblowing*. I bring theſe Inſtances to ſhew, how far a Scorner may be led out of the way of Truth, by a little Knack of playing upon Things and Words, which he miſcalls *Wit*; and upon which he ſhall value himſelf more, and be wiſer in his own Conceit, than *Seven Men that can render a Reaſon*.

The

SERM. V.

The *Fourth* and laſt Thing, from whence we propoſed to give an Account of his Deceptions, was *Senſuality*: and whether this too doth not, for the moſt Part, accompany a Contempt of Religion, I appeal to the Obſervation and Experience of every one that hears me. Look round the World, and you ſhall ſeldom find a Man looſe in his Principles, who is not ſo likewiſe in Manners. There may poſſibly be, now and then in an Age, an Inſtance of ſome cold Phlegmatick Man that ſhall ſet up for overturning Religion and Morality, merely for the Sake of Contradiction, or to get himſelf a Name by it, without the Deſign of indulging his own Appetites in ſo doing: but this is a very rare Caſe; generally the *Scorners* are, as St. *Peter* and St. *Jude* have in their ſeveral Epiſtles agreed to deſcribe them, *Men, who walk after their own Luſts.* Accordingly, we may obſerve, that this ſcorning Humour hath been moſt prevalent in thoſe Ages of the World, in which the Love of Pleaſure, and the Arts of Eaſe and Luxury

2 Pet. iii. 3. Jude 13.

SERM. V. ury did moſt abound; and is commonly incident to Men, at that Time of their Lives, when their Luſts are moſt ungoverned, and their Blood boils hotteſt. 'Tis chiefly the young robuſt Sinner that indulges himſelf in it, *whilſt* he is in the midſt of his Enjoyments: For though a Man may continue in the Practice of this impious Folly to the very End of his Life, yet the Habit itſelf is generally formed much earlier.

Now the Senſual Man is, of all Men living, the moſt improper for Enquiries after Truth, and the leaſt at Leiſure for it. He is never ſedate and cool; and therefore not able to fix his Attention to a Point, and go through with it. He is never diſintereſted and impartial; and, therefore, not capable of deliberating freely. He is already under the Dominion and Power of his own Luſts; and perhaps likes to be ſo, and is very unwilling to ſhake off his Chains. Now ſuch a Man, ſo qualified, is, no doubt, a very incompetent Judge of Divine Truth, and very unfit to conſider the Pleas that are brought for

for it. His Search into theſe Things is like to be with no great Evenneſs and Fairneſs: How can it, when it comes with ſtrong Wiſhes, that he may find it all a Miſtake? Indeed, when a Man allows himſelf in all Sorts of Impurities, and is determined to go on in them; and yet finds himſelf under the troubleſome Reſtraint of Principles, and the Dread of Religion, which hangs continually over him; the only Way for him to purſue his Enjoyments, and yet be eaſy, is, to ſet his Face directly againſt the Doctrines of Religion, that give him any Check or Diſturbance, and reſolve to get rid of them as ſoon as he can. And he may put the Thoughts, which ariſe in him upon this Occaſion, together, and make a Book of them, if he pleaſes; and then tell us, that this is a ſober Enquiry after Truth, and a free Diſcuſſion of the Point in Debate; but there is nothing of that in it: He thinks of Truth, juſt as a Man doth of his Enemy, with Spite and Anger, and a Deſign only of finding out whatever may blaſt and expoſe it. This SER. M. V.

SERM. V. is a ſtrange contumelious Way of treating Divine Things, and would tempt even a good Man to return the Affronts done to Virtue and Piety, by opening the Characters of thoſe who do them; in which we ſhould commonly find, that Senſuality and Looſeneſs of Life had a very great and particular Share. But ſome men, who write pretended *Hiſtories of Religion*, are beholden to the real Religion of others, that their Hiſtories are not written.

Thus have I run through thoſe four ſeveral Properties, which remarkably belong to the Character of *a Scorner*; and ſhewn you, how each of them contributes to miſinform and miſlead him in his Purſuit of Wiſdom; ſo that, ſuppoſing him really and in good Earneſt to *ſeek* it, yet, thus ſetting out, and thus qualified, it is not at all probable that he ſhould find it.

And now the plain and obvious Uſe we are to make of this Diſcourſe, is, to ſatisfy ourſelves from hence, how it hath come to paſs, that the true Religion, all along, in the ſeveral Ages of the World, hath not been entertained by many of the ſeem-

ſeemingly Wittieſt and Wiſeſt among the Children of Men. To this ſtartling Queſtion we can now give a ſhort and eaſy Anſwer, from the Obſervation of the Text, *They were Scorners.* They were either *Proud* and Opinionative Men, that could not endure to learn plain humble Leſſons of Piety and Goodneſs, eſpecially from ſuch as they had no Eſteem of, no Value for: Or their Minds were tainted with an ill-natured and unreaſonable *Suſpicion*, which, from finding out ſome Cheats in Religion, led them to pronounce all Religion a Cheat. They had a Talent perhaps, at *ridiculing* honeſt Rules and Maxims, and making Sport with Things ſacred and ſerious; and, therefore, to have owned any fixed Scheme of Religious Principles, would have been a mighty Damp to their Imaginations, and have taken away from them the Subject of above half their Wit and Pleaſantneſs. Or, laſtly, They were Men of *ſenſual* and *impure Lives*, who were reſolved to make their Opinions, and their Pleaſures as conſiſtent as they could; and who there-

SERM. V.

SERM. V. fore were obliged, in point of Intereſt, to diſbelieve every thing that made againſt them.

This is the ſhort and true Account of the Matter; and will appear to be ſo, if we caſt our Eyes backward on the Story of the World, and conſider, who they have been, that have rejected the true Religion, all along from the Creation down to this Time.

In the Old World, *Noah*, who was the only Man that preſerved the Worſhip of the True God in his Family, ſeems to have been an honeſt plain-hearted Man; Gen. vi. 9. *juſt and perfect in his Generation*, (as he is deſcribed in Scripture) *and walking with God*. The reſt of the World are ſaid to have eaten and drunken, to have married and been given in marriage, *i. e.* they were Men who lived in all the Enjoyments of Senſe, who reveled, and took their Fill of all the Good Things of this World; and, to be ſure, were very merry and very bitter upon thoſe that did not. How did they deride that grave Preacher of Righteouſneſs, and his Precife Family, when

when He and his Sons talked to them of Righteouſneſs, Temperance, and Judgment! Eſpecially, when he told them that there was ſuch a Flood coming, and that he was building that Ark to preſerve himſelf and his Houſhold, what a Jeſt was he to the Men of Parts and Pleaſure! How many Scornful and Gay Things were ſaid upon this Occaſion, while the Work went forward by thoſe who thought themſelves very wiſe, and Him very fooliſh! But the Fountains of the great Deep were broken up, and the Windows of Heaven opened; and Then they began to change their Opinions when (alaſs!) it was too late to learn. SERM. V.

In the next great Period after the Flood, the True Religion was confined to the ſingle Nation of the *Jews*: and one may think it ſtrange at firſt Sight, that if it were the True Religion, it ſhould be ſo confined; that the wiſe and knowing Part of Mankind ſhould not diſcern the Strength of the Evidence that was brought for the Divine Original of the Law of *Moſes*, nor receive the God of *Iſrael* for Their God.

SERM. V.

But, if we conſider a little further, we ſhall be ſatisfied, that the true Reaſon of Mens Infidelity, throughout this long Period of Time, was, a mean and Contemptuous Notion they had entertained of the *Jewiſh* People, and of their Rites and Ceremonies. The wiſe Men of the *Eaſt*, in the Earlieſt Ages, and the Philoſophers of the *Weſt*, in Later Times, had too high an Opinion of themſelves, and too low an one of that Little, Narrow-ſoul'd Superſtitious Nation, to ſubmit themſelves to be taught by them. The *Jews* were a Proverb and a By-word to the reſt of the World, the perpetual Subject of their Scorn and Reproach: and who can think (may we ſuppoſe one of theſe wiſe Heathens to have ſaid) that Truth ſhould lie hid among ſuch an *odd* ſort of People, in ſuch a little Spot of the World?

And thus, again, when Chriſtianity firſt appeared, it made no great Progreſs among the Diſputers of this World, among the Men of Wit and Subtlety, for this very Reaſon; *becauſe* they were Scorners. The Goſpel was to the *Jews*

(to the moſt Learned and Proud Sect among the *Jews*, the *Phariſees*, a *ſtumbling Block*;) and to thoſe of higher Repute among the *Greeks*, *Fooliſhneſs*. The great Pretenders to Knowledge every where unanimouſly contemned and derided it, as a poor and low Syſtem of Principles; and could never once think of humbling their Minds, to entertain the Simplicity of the Goſpel. SERM. V. 1 Cor. i. 23.

How ſhould the great Lords of the Earth, who ſwarm in all the Delights of Senſe, and thought themſelves born to enjoy them, ſubmit to be talked out of their Pleaſures and their Privileges by a few Ignorant Fiſhermen, and Tentmakers? The Story of the Propagation of the Goſpel in *Jewry*, might perhaps make a Part of the Converſation in the Court of *Tiberius*; it was, probably, ſuch a Subject of Diſcourſe to Them, as the *Quietiſts* in *Italy* were to Us, at their firſt appearing. The Novelty of the Thing might occaſion ſome Reflexions and Enquiries: But it was not to be expected, that Men of Pleaſure and Parts ſhould give themſelves

SERM. V. the Trouble of Examining nicely into the Pretenſions with which this new Religion ſet up, or of conſidering, in good Earneſt, whether they ought to become Proſelytes to it.

We are not to wonder, therefore, if, in ſome Ages after Chriſtianity, we find not much ſaid to the Advantage of it, in the Writings of thoſe eminent *Greeks* and *Romans*, who are allowed to have been the beſt Maſters of Polite Thought and Expreſſion. Alaſs! *Porphyry* muſt have been contented to confeſs the Vanity of Philoſophy, and *Lucian* muſt in great meaſure have forgone his Skill in Satire; the Witty Libertines of thoſe Times muſt have parted with much of the Eſteem they had and with moſt of their Pleaſures, if they had once admitted the Truth of Chriſtianity: And, therefore, they agreed in running down the Reputation of that, leſt they ſhould loſe their Own.

And, as it was immediately after our Saviour's coming, ſo hath it been ever ſince to this very Day. The Doctrines of the Croſs have never, in any Age, met, nor will

will they ever in any future Age, meet with a kind and hearty Reception, among Thoſe, who *ſit in the Seat of Scorners.* SERM. V.

But let us not therefore be dejected, becauſe there are many whom the World eſteems, who yet eſteem not Us, and our Holy and Undefiled Religion! Neither let us ſuſpect ourſelves, as being out of the Way and impoſed upon, becauſe Men of a greater Reach perhaps, and of a more improved Underſtanding than We, are not of our mind. *Solomon*, who was certainly a Man of Underſtanding, and who was of our mind, doth, in a very few Words (which I cannot repeat too often) afford us a full and comfortable Solution of the Caſe; *A Scorner*, ſaith he, *ſeeketh Wiſdom, and findeth it not.*

From the Account of former Times it appears to us, that thus it always *hath been*; and from Reflexions on the Nature of Man, that thus it neceſſarily *muſt be*; and, therefore, let us poſſeſs our Souls in Patience and Peace; and go on in the plain Paths of Godlineſs and Honeſty, without turning to the Right, or to the Left, for whatever

SERM. V. ever Men ſcornfully witty can ſay of us, or to us.

Prov. iii. 34

Let us beg of Him, *who ſcorneth the Scorners, but giveth Grace unto the Lowly*, let us beg of Him to Beſtow on us, to Preſerve, and Increaſe in us that *ſerious and humble* Frame of Spirit, which alone can qualify us for a Right Apprehenſion of the Truths and Myſteries of the Goſpel; and which is, therefore, certainly, Preferable to all other Endowments of Mind, however the World may have miſplaced the greateſt Part of its Eſteem upon them.

Eccluſ. xxiii. 4, 5, 6.

And let us, in order to this End, frequently take to ourſelves the humble Words of the *Son of Sirach*, and ſay: *O Lord, Father and God of my Life, give me not a proud Look; but turn away from thy Servant always an haughty Mind! Turn away from me vain Hopes and Concupiſcence, and thou ſhalt hold him up that is deſirous always to ſerve thee! Let not the Greedineſs of the Belly, nor Luſt of the Fleſh take hold of Me; and give not over Me thy Servant to an Impudent Mind!*

And

And as for thoſe who contemn Us, and Our Narrow Principles, and who make Us their Deriſion daily, let Us (in the Words of the Apoſtle) *not ceaſe to make mention of them in our Prayers, that the God of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Father of Glory, may give unto them the Spirit of Wiſdom and Revelation to the Acknowledgement of him; The Eyes of their Underſtanding being enlightened, that they may know, what is the Hope of his Calling, and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.* SERM. V. Eph. i. 16, 17, 18.

A DIS-

A

DISCOURSE

Occaſioned by the

DEATH

Of the Right Honourable

The Lady *CUTTS*,

An. Dom. M.DC.XCVIII.

ECCLES. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than to go to the Houſe of Feaſting: for that is the End of all Men; and the Living will lay it to Heart.

THE firſt Step toward Happineſs is, to correct our falſe Opinions concerning it, by learning to eſteem every thing,

SERM. VI.

SERM. VI.

thing, not according to that Rate and Value, which the World, or our own miſtaken Imaginations may have placed upon it, but according to that which in itſelf, and in the Accounts of right Reaſon and Religion, it really bears.

The Preacher therefore hath, in this Chapter, laid together a Set of Religious Paradoxes; which, however they may ſtartle and ſhock us a little, upon the firſt Hearing, yet, when cloſely examined, will appear to be clear unqueſtionable Truths, by which the whole Courſe of our Lives ought to be ſteered and governed.

In the firſt Verſe of this Chapter (the Verſe before the Text) he tells us, that *a Good Name is better than precious Ointment, and the Day of one's Death than the Day of one's Birth. A Good Name is better than precious Ointment*; *i. e.* rich Oils, and ſweet Odors (in the Uſe of which the People of the *Eaſt* much delighted) are not half ſo grateful, or valuable, as a good Reputation, well found-

ed:

ed: This is more truly fragrant, more diffuſive of its Influence, more durable: It gives a Man greater Comfort and Refreſhment, while he is Living; and preſerves him, when Dead, better than the moſt precious Embalmings. SERM. VI.

And again, *The Day of one's Death is better than the Day of one's Birth*; i. e. the *Day of the Death* of ſuch an one, as poſſeſſes and deſerves a *Good Name*; of ſuch an one, as hath lived well, and died well, is preferable by far to the *Day of his Birth:* For it gives him Admittance into a State of perfect Reſt and Tranquillity, of undiſturbed Joy and Happineſs: whereas the Day of his Birth was only an Inlet into a Troubleſome World, and the Beginning of Sorrows.

And then it follows, very naturally, in the Words of the Text, that *It is better* alſo *to go to the Houſe of Mourning, than to go to the Houſe of Feaſting.* As Death to a Good Man is more advantageous than Life; ſo to a Wiſe Man the Contemplation of the firſt is more deſirable than all the Enjoyments of the Latter:

SERM. VI. Latter: He had much rather be preſent at the ſad Solemnities of a Funeral, than partake of thoſe Feſtival Rejoicings, which are uſual in all Nations, but eſpecially among the *Jews*, at the Birth of a Child.

Hard Doctrine this, to the Men of Liberty and Pleaſure! who have ſaid to themſelves, *Come on, let us enjoy the things that are preſent, let us fill ourſelves with coſtly Wine and Ointments, and let no Flower of the Spring paſs by us; let us Crown ourſelves with Roſe-buds before they be withered.* Hard Doctrine, I ſay, it is to ſuch Men as theſe; and which will run the Hazard of not being entertained by them. The Wiſe Man, therefore, hath condeſcended to prove, as well as aſſert it, and to back the ſevere Rule he hath laid down, with very convincing Reaſons: *For that*, ſaith he, *is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to Heart.* As if he had ſaid, This Dark and Melancholy State it will one Day certainly come to Our Share to try; and what muſt ſome Time

or

or other be undergone, ought to be con- SERM.
ſidered beforehand: this is *the End of all* VI.
Men; and all Men, therefore, ſhould
have their Eye and their Thoughts upon
it. And then further — We are moſt of
us ſo immerſed in the Pleaſures, and ſo
taken up with the Follies of Life, that
we need all Methods of reducing our
ſtraggling Thoughts and Deſires, and of
giving ourſelves a ſerious Frame and
Compoſure of Mind: and of all Me-
thods, this of repairing to the Houſe of
Mourning, is beſt adapted to that Good
End, and will ſooneſt and moſt effectual-
ly bring it about; *The Living will lay it
to Heart*.

I have largely explained the Connexion
and Meaning of the Words, which have
been pitched upon to employ Your
Thoughts on this mournful Occaſion.
The next Thing ſhould be, to excite You
to a Compliance with the Direction
there given, by the particular Arguments
ſuggeſted in the Text, and by ſeveral
other powerful and moving Conſidera-
tions: to prove to You, the Folly and
Emptineſs

SERM. IV. Emptineſs of a Life led all in Mirth, and Jollity, and Pleaſure; the Wiſdom and Reaſonableneſs of ſhifting the Scene ſometimes, of turning the gloomy Side of Things towards ourſelves, of exchanging *the Houſe of Feaſting* for *the Houſe of Mourning*, and of making a diſcreet and decent Uſe of thoſe ſad Opportunities of Reflexion, which God, mercifully ſevere, is pleaſed to put into our Hands.

But I am prevented in this Part of my Diſcourſe, by the Pious Deſign of this preſent Aſſembly; You are already doing that which I ſhould recommend to You from the Text; paying the Tribute of Your Tears to the Memory of One whoſe Worth You knew, and whoſe Loſs You ſenſibly feel; and bewailing Her, under the different Characters She bore of a Wife, a Daughter, a Relation, a Miſtreſs, a Friend.

All, therefore, I have to do, on this Occaſion, is, to fall in with Your Pious Grief, already raiſed, and to bear a Part in it, by dwelling together with You a

while on the Character of that *Incompara-* SER M.
rable Lady, whose Death we lament; by VI.
uniting, as well as I am able, the scattered Parts of it, and recalling to Your Thoughts at once the several Excellencies and Perfections of which it was composed: which made her beloved and reverenced by You while Living, and will make her Memory ever Dear and Desirable to You, now she is Dead; and which raised her above the greatest Part of her Sex, much more than any Outward Marks of Rank and Distinction.

It is now, after her Decease, a fit Time to speak of her in those Terms of Respect which she deserved: for in her Life-time she would not suffer it, and took some Pains to avoid it; hiding as many of her Virtues as she could from Publick Observation, and so behaving herself in the Practice of those she could not hide, as shewed she had no mind to be told of them: discountenancing, as far as lay in her Power, that odious and designing Flattery, which, through the wicked Fashion of an Insincere World, is now

SERM. VI. thought to be a kind of Cuſtomary Debt due to her Sex, and almoſt a neceſſary Part of good Breeding.

But though the Living can ſeldom be praiſed with Decency, yet the Dead certainly often may; eſpecially ſuch of the Dead, as had a very unuſual Degree of Indifference and Unconcernedneſs for what was ſaid to their Advantage, while they were Living.

There is a publick Homage due to Deſert, if we take a proper Seaſon of Paying it; and the Miniſters of the Goſpel, who are entruſted with ſo many Methods of promoting Piety in the World are, among the reſt, entruſted with This, of *giving Honour where Honour is due*; and of truly repreſenting to the Minds of Men ſuch ſhining Patterns of Virtue, as are moſt likely to engage their Attention, and provoke their Imitation: It is our immediate and particular Employment to praiſe God; and it doth, no doubt, in ſome meaſure alſo belong to us, to praiſe thoſe that are Like him.

And

SERM. VI.

And now how ſhall I enter upon this fruitful Argument? What Particular of her comprehenſive Character ſhall I firſt chuſe to inſiſt on? Let us Determine our ſelves to begin there where ſhe always began, at her Devotions. In theſe ſhe was very Punctual and Regular: Morning and Evening came not up more conſtantly in their Courſe, than her ſtated Hours of Private Prayer; which ſhe obſerved not formally, as a Taſk, but returned to them always with Deſire, Delight and Eagerneſs. She would on no Occaſion diſpenſe with herſelf from paying this Duty: no Buſineſs, no common Accident of Life could divert her from it: She eſteemed it her great Honour and Happineſs to attend upon God; and She reſolved to find Leiſure for That, for whatever elſe ſhe might want it.

How ſhe behaved herſelf in theſe Secret Tranſactions, between God and her own Soul, is known to Him alone whom ſhe worſhiped: But, if we may gueſs at her Privacies by what was ſeen of her in Publick, we may be ſure, that ſhe was

SERM. VI.

full of Humility, Devotion, and Fervency; for ſo ſhe remarkably was always, during the Time of Divine Service. Her Behaviour was then very devout and ſolemn, and yet the moſt decent, eaſy, and unaffected, that could be; there was nothing in it either negligent and looſe, or extravagant and ſtrained: it was throughout ſuch, as declared itſelf not to be the Work of the Paſſions, but to flow from the Underſtanding, and from a clear Knowledge of the true Grounds and Principles of that her reaſonable Service.

This Knowledge ſhe attained by early Inſtructions, by much Reading, and Meditation, (to which ſhe appeared from her Childhood to be addicted) and, give me leave to add, by a very diligent and exact Attendance on the Leſſons of Piety which were uttered from the Pulpit; which no one practiſed better, becauſe no one delighted in, liſtened to, or conſidered more. For at theſe Performances ſhe was all Attention, all Ear; ſhe kept her Heart fixed and intent on its holy Work, by keeping her Eye from wandring.

It

It was her Misfortune indeed, that the Exemplarineſs of her Behaviour called off the Eyes of ſeveral to obſerve it; but more Her and their Misfortune, that, when they had ſeen it, and ſatisfied their Curioſity, they did not go on alſo to imitate it. She often expreſſed her Diſſatisfaction at that Indecency of Carriage which univerſally prevails in our Churches; and wondered that They ſhould be moſt careleſs of their Behaviour towards God, who are moſt ſcrupulouſly nice in exacting and paying all the little Decencies that are in Uſe among Men. SERM. VI.

When the Bread of Life was diſtributed, ſhe was ſure to be there, a devout and never-failing Communicant; and the Strictneſs of her Attention, and the Reverence of her Behaviour were, if it were poſſible, raiſed and improved on thoſe Occaſions: The lively image of a crucified Saviour, then exhibited, could not but make very moving Impreſſions on a Mind that abounded with ſo much pious Warmth and Tenderneſs.

SERM. VI.

Books ſhe took Pleaſure in, and made good Uſe of; chiefly Books of Divinity, and Devotion; which ſhe ſtudied, and reliſhed above all others. Hiſtory too had very often a Share in her Reflexions; and ſometimes ſhe looked into Pieces of pure Diverſion and Amuſement, whenever ſhe found them written in ſuch a Way, as to be innocently entertaining. I need not tell You, to how narrow a Choice ſhe was, by this means, confined.

But of all Books, the Book of God was That, in which ſhe was moſt delighted and employed; and which was never, for any conſiderable Time, out of her Hands. No doubt, ſhe knew, and felt the great Uſe and ſweet Influence of it, in calming her Mind, and regulating her Deſires, and lifting up her Thoughts towards Heaven, in feeding and ſpreading that Holy Flame, which the Love of God had kindled in her Heart, and which ſhe took care, by this means, to keep perpetually burning.

When ſhe met with any thing there, or in any other pious Book, which would be

be of remarkable Uſe to her in the Conduct of her Life and Affairs, ſhe truſted not her Memory with it; not even that excellent Memory, which ſhe ſafely truſted with Things of leſſer moment; but immediately committed it to Writing. Many Obſervations of this kind ſhe hath left, drawn from good Authors, but chiefly from thoſe Sacred Pages; in collecting which, whether her Judgment, or her Piety, had the largeſt Share, it is not eaſy to ſay. SERM. VI.

The Paſſages of Holy Writ which ſhe took Notice of, were indeed commonly ſuch, as related either to the Concerns of her Spiritual Eſtate, or to Matters of Prudence: but it appears alſo that ſhe ſpent ſome Time in meditating on thoſe Places where the Sublimeſt Points of Chriſtian Doctrine are contained, and in poſſeſſing herſelf with a deep Senſe of the wonderful Love of God towards us, madiſeſted in the myſterious Work of our Redemption; for ſhe had ſomething more than what, in the Language of this looſe Age, is called, *a Lady's Religion.*

SERM. VI.

gion. She endeavoured to underſtand the great Articles of Faith, as well as to practiſe the good Rules Life, contained in the Goſpel; and ſhe ſenſibly found, that the beſt Way to excite herſelf to the Practice of the one, was to endeavour to underſtand the other.

And in this Book of God ſhe was more particularly converſant on God's Day; a Day ever held ſacred by her, and which therefore, always in her Family wore a Face of Devotion ſuitable to the Dignity of it. It was truly a Day of Reſt to all under her Roof: her Servants were then diſmiſſed from a good Part of their Attendance upon her, that they might be at Liberty to attend on their great Lord and Maſter, whom both She, and They, were equally bound to obey. There was ſuch a Silence and Solemnity at that Time obſerved by all about her, as might have become the *Houſe of Mourning*; and yet ſo much Eaſe and Serenity viſible in their Looks (at leaſt in her Looks there was) as ſhewed, that They, who were in the *Houſe of Feaſting*, were not better ſatisfied.

fisfied. Thus did ſhe prepare and diſpoſe herſelf for the Enjoyment of that perfect Reſt, the Celebration of that Endleſs Sabbath, which ſhe is now entered upon; thus did ſhe practiſe beforehand upon Earth, the Duties, the Devotions, the Cuſtoms, and Manners of Heaven. SERM. VI.

To ſecure her Proficiency in Virtue, ſhe kept an exact Journal of her Life; in which was contained the Hiſtory of all her Spiritual Affairs, and of the ſeveral Turns that happened in her Soul: A true, naked, impartial Hiſtory! and yet (which ſeldom happens in true ones) ſuch an one, where the Perſon deſcribed is not charged with many Blemiſhes and Failings. Alas for Us, that the Thread of it was no longer continued!

In this Glaſs ſhe every Day dreſſed her Mind, to this faithful Monitor ſhe repaired for Advice and Direction; compared the paſt with the preſent, judged of what would be, by what had been, obſerved nicely the ſeveral ſucceſſive Degrees of Holineſs ſhe got, and of Human Infirmity ſhe ſhook off; and traced every

SERM. VI. every ſingle Step ſhe took onward in her Way towards Heaven.

One would have imagined, that ſo much Exactneſs and Severity in private ſhould have affected a little her publick Actions and Diſcourſes, and have ſlid inſenſibly into her Carriage; and yet nothing could be more free, ſimple, and natural. She had the Reality, without the Outſide and Show of Strictneſs: all her Rules, all her Performances ſat ſo well and graceful upon her, that they appeared to be as much her Pleaſure as her Duty: She was, in the midſt of them, perfectly eaſy to herſelf, and a Delight to all that were about her; ever Chearful in her Behaviour, but withal ever Calm and Even, her Satisfaction, like a deep untroubled Stream, ran on, without any of that Violence, or Noiſe, which ſometimes the ſhalloweſt Pleaſures do moſt abound in.

However Chearful and Agreeable as ſhe was, yet ſhe never carried her good Humour ſo far, as to ſmile at a Prophane, an Ill-natured, or an Unmannerly Jeſt;

on the contrary, in her higheſt Mirth, it made her remarkably Grave and Serious. She had an extraordinary Nicety of Temper as to all the leaſt Approaches to Faults of that kind, and ſhewed a very quick and ſenſible Concern at any thing, which ſhe thought it did not become either her to hear, or others to ſay. SERM. VI.

True Piety, which chiefly conſiſts in an Humility and Submiſſion of Mind towards God, is attended always with Humility and Goodneſs towards his Creatures; and ſo it was in this *Excellent Lady*. Never was there a more deep, and unfeigned, and artleſs Lowlineſs of Mind ſeen in her Rank and Station: As far as ſhe was placed above the moſt of the World, ſhe converſed as it were upon the Level with all of them; and yet, when ſhe ſtooped the loweſt towards them, ſhe took care even at that time to preſerve the Reſpect that was due to her from them. She had ſo much true Merit, that ſhe was not afraid of being looked into; and therefore durſt be familiar: And the Effect of that Familiarity was,

SERM. VI. was, that, by being better known, ſhe was more loved and valued. Not only no one of her Inferiors ever came uneaſy from her, (as hath been ſaid of ſome Great Ones;) but no one ever went uneaſy to her; ſo aſſured were all beforehand of her Sweetneſs of Temper, and obliging Reception! When ſhe opened her Lips, Gracious Words always proceeded from thence, and *in her Tongue was the Law of Kindneſs.* Her Reſervedneſs, and Love of Privacy, might poſſibly be miſinterpreted ſometimes for an Overvalue of herſelf, by thoſe who did not know her; but the leaſt Degree of Acquaintance made all thoſe Suſpicions vaniſh. For, though her Perfections both of Body and Mind were very extraordinary, yet ſhe was the only Perſon that ſeemed, without any Endeavour to ſeem, inſenſible of them. She was, it is true, in as much Danger of being vain, as great Beauty, and a good Natural Wit could make her: But ſhe had ſuch an Overbalance of Diſcretion, that ſhe was never in Pain to have the one ſeen, or the

the other heard. Indeed, this was particular to her, and a very diſtinguiſhing Part of her Character, that ſhe never ſtudied Appearances, nor made any Advances towards the Opinion of the World; being contented to *be* whatever was Good or Deſerving, without endeavouring in the leaſt to be *thought* ſo: and this, not out of any affected Diſregard to Publick Eſteem, but merely from a Modeſty and Eaſineſs of Nature, which made her give way to others, who were more willing to be obſerved. And yet ſhe had alſo her Hours of Openneſs and Freedom, when her Soul eaſed itſelf to Familiars and Friends; and then *out of the good Treaſure of her Heart* what *good Things* did ſhe *bring forth?* And with what Delight was ſhe liſtened to by thoſe who had the Happineſs to converſe with her? So that a Doubt it is, whether ſhe were moſt to be admired for what ſhe did, or for what ſhe did not, ſay. It was wonderful that One, who, when ſhe pleaſed, could diſcourſe ſo fitly and ſo freely, ſhould yet chuſe to be ſilent on ſo many Occaſions; and it was ſurprizing that ſhe, who was ſuch SERM. VI.

SERM. VI. ſuch a Lover of Silence, ſhould, whenever ſhe ſpake, charm all that heard her.

We may be ſure, that, whilſt ſhe thus commanded her Tongue, ſhe kept as ſtrict and watchful a Guard upon her Paſſions; thoſe eſpecially of the rough and troubleſome kind, with which ſhe was ſcarce ever ſeen to be diſquieted. She knew not what the Diſorders of Anger were, even on Occaſions that might ſeem to juſtify, if not to require it: As much as ſhe hated Vice, ſhe choſe rather to look it out of Countenance, than to be ſevere againſt it; and to win the bad over to the Side of Virtue by her Example, than by her Rebukes.

Her ſweet Deportment towards Thoſe who were with her, could be outdone by nothing but her Tenderneſs in relation to the Abſent; whom ſhe was ſure to think, and ſpeak as well of as was poſſible: And when their Character was plainly ſuch, as could have no good Colours put upon it, yet ſhe would ſhew her diſlike of it no otherwiſe than by ſaying nothing of them. Neither her Good-Nature, nor her Religion; neither her Civility, nor her Prudence,

dence, would ſuffer her to cenſure any one: ſhe thought ſhe had enough to do at home, in that Way, without looking much abroad; and therefore turned the Edge of all her Reflexions upon herſelf. Indeed ſhe ſpared others as much as if ſhe had been afraid of them, and herſelf as little, as if ſhe had had many Faults that wanted mending: And yet, it was becauſe ſhe could, after the ſevereſt Scrutiny, find no great Harm in herſelf, that ſhe could ſcarce be brought to ſuſpect any in others. SERM. VI.

Her Converſation might, for this Reaſon, ſeem to want ſomewhat of that Salt and Smartneſs, which the ill-natured Part of the World are ſo fond of; a Want, that ſhe could eaſily have ſupplied, would her Principles have given her leave: but her ſettled Opinion was, that the Good Name of any one was too nice and ſerious a thing to be played with; and that it was, a fooliſh kind of Mirth, which, in order, to divert ſome, hurt others. She could never bring herſelf to think, that the only thing which gave Life and Spirit to Diſcourſe, was, to have Somebody's Faults the

SERM. VI. the Subject of it; or, that the Pleaſure of a Viſit lay in giving up the Company to one another's Sport and Malice, by turns. And if theſe are the chief Marks of Wit and Good-breeding, it muſt be confeſſed that ſhe had neither.

With all this Goodneſs, Gentleneſs, and Meekneſs of Nature, ſhe had at the ſame time a Degree of Spirit and Firmneſs, unuſual in her Sex; and was particularly obſerved to have a wonderful Preſence of Mind in any Accident of Danger: for Innocence and Courage are nearly allied, and even in the ſofteſt Tempers, where the one of theſe is in Perfection, there will and muſt be a good Degree of the other.

Shall I ſay any thing of that innate Modeſty of Temper, and ſpotleſs Purity of Heart, which ſhone throughout her whole Life and Converſation? A Quality ſo ſtrictly required of her Sex, that it may be thought not ſo properly commendable in any of them to have it, as infamous to want it. However, in the moſt common and ordinary Graces, there are uncommon Heights and Degrees; and it was the particular

particular Happineſs of this *Lady* Remarkably to excel in every Virtue that belonged to her; even in thoſe, in which Chriſtians of the loweſt Attainments do in ſome degree Excel. SERM. VI.

Shall I add, that this Love of Purity was the Cauſe, why ſhe baniſhed herſelf from thoſe Public Diverſions of the Town, at which it was ſcarce poſſible to be preſent, without hearing ſomewhat that wounded chaſte Ears; and for which, ſhe thought, no Amends could be made to Virtue by any degree of Wit, or Humour, with which, perhaps, they might otherwiſe abound? Theſe Good Qualities, ſhe knew, ſerved only to recommend the Poiſon, and make it palatable; and, therefore, ſhe thought it a piece of Service to other People (who might, perhaps, be influenced by her Example) to ſtand off, though ſhe herſelf were ſecured from the Infection. This, queſtionleſs, was One Reaſon of her allowing herſelf in thoſe dangerous Entertainments ſo ſparingly; but it was but One of many: She had really neither Reliſh nor Leiſure for

SERM. VI. them; nor for a thouſand other things, which the World miſcals Pleaſures. Not that ſhe wanted naturally a Taſte for any thing of this kind; for her Apprehenſion was fine, and her Wit very good, and very ready at Command, whenever ſhe pleaſed to exerciſe it: But ſhe had turned her Thoughts ſo much towards Things of Uſe and Importance, that Matters of mere Pleaſure grew flat and indifferent to her; She was ſo taken up with the Care of improving her Underſtanding, and bettering her Life, in the Diſcharge of the Offices neceſſary to her Rank, in the Duties of her Cloſet, and the Concerns of her Family, that, ſhe found, at the Foot of the Account, but little Time (and had leſs Mind) to give in to thoſe vain Amuſements.

She did not think it (as, I fear, it is too often thought) the peculiar Happineſs and Privilege of the Great, to have nothing to do; but took care to fill every Vacant Minute of her Life with ſome uſeful or innocent Employment. The ſeveral Hours of the Day had their peculiar

liar Buſineſs allotted to them (whether it were Converſation or Work, Reading or Domeſtic Affairs) each of which came up orderly in its turn; and was, as the Wiſe Man ſpeaks (to be ſure, under Her Management it was) *beautiful in its Seaſon.* SERM. VI.

And this Regularity of hers, was free and natural, without Formality or Conſtraint; it was neither troubleſome to Her, nor to thoſe that were near her: When, therefore, any Accident intervened, it was interrupted at that Time with as much Eaſe as it was at other Times practiſed: for among all her diſcretionary Rules, the chief was, to ſeem to have none; and to make thoſe ſhe had laid down to herſelf give way always to Circumſtances and Occaſions.

She wrought with her own Hands often, when ſhe could more profitably, and pleaſingly have employed her Time in Meditation, or Books: but ſhe was willing to ſet an Example to thoſe, who could not; and ſhe took care, therefore, that her Example ſhould be well followed by

SERM. VI. all that were under her immediate Influence: for ſhe knew well, that the Deſcription of a good Wife and a Perfect Woman in the *Proverbs* (a Deſcription which ſhe much delighted in, and often read) was ſpent chiefly in commending that Diligence by which *She looketh well to the Ways of her Houſhold, and eateth not the Bread of Idleneſs*: And ſhe knew likewiſe alſo, that the Perſon, whoſe Words theſe are ſaid to be, was no leſs a Woman than the Mother of King *Lemuel*.

Diligence and Frugality are Siſters: and She, therefore, who was ſo well acquainted with the one, was not likely to be a Stranger to the other. She was ſtrictly careful of her Expences; and yet knew how to be generous and to abound, when the Occaſion required it. But of all Ways of good Management, ſhe liked That the worſt which ſhuts our Hands to the Poor; towards whom ſhe always ſhewed herſelf very Compaſſionate and Charitable. Of the other Delights, with which an high Fortune furniſhed her, ſhe was almoſt inſenſible; but on this Account ſhe valued it,

it, that it gave her an Opportunity of pur- SERM.
ſuing the ſeveral Pleaſures of Beneficence, VI.
and of taſting all the Sweets of Well-doing. *She delivered the Poor that cried, and the Fatherleſs, and him that had none to help him: The Bleſſing of him that was ready to periſh came upon her, and ſhe cauſed the Widow's Heart to ſing.* Very eaſy, ſure, will this make her Audit at the great Day of Account; That Charity will, doubtleſs, be allow'd to ſcreen her few Infirmities and Faults, which is of great Efficacy ſufficient to *cover the Multitude of Sins.*

In the Exerciſe of this, and of all other Virtues, She was wonderfully ſecret; endeavouring to come up, as near as ſhe could, to the Rule of *not letting her Right Hand know what her Left Hand did.* And this Secrecy of hers ſhe managed ſo well, that ſome of the moſt remarkable Inſtances of her Goodneſs were not known, till after her Death; no, not by Him, who was partaker of all her Joys and Sorrows.

Retirement and Privacy ſhe always loved, and therefore choſe it, when, after

SERM. VI. the Death of a near Relation, who had the Care of Educating Her, ſhe was at liberty to have lived otherwiſe. From that Time to her Marriage, which was more than Three Years, ſhe hid herſelf in the Country; having an early and ſettled Averſion to the Noiſe and Inconveniences of a Town-life; and too little an Opinion of herſelf, to think, that it was ſo much the Intereſt of Virtue and Religion, as it really was that ſhe ſhould be known and diſtinguiſhed.

When, afterwards, ſhe went to Court, (as it was neceſſary for Her ſometimes to do) ſhe did it with an Air, which plainly ſhewed, that ſhe went to pay her Duty there, and not to delight herſelf in the Pomp and Glitter of that Place. Had ſhe gone thither ſoon enough to ſee that *Good and Glorious Queen*, who was the Ornament of It, and of her Sex, ſhe had been taken, we may preſume, into her Intimacy: for their Minds were nearly allied, and their Characters and Manners, and Ways of Life not unlike; allowing for the Difference of Stations.

I need

I need not, I cannot well ſay more of her: and if, therefore, I have fallen ſhort of her Character (as I am ſenſible I have, in many Parts of it, which are here mentioned, and in others, which are ſtill left untouched) I deſire, thoſe particular Defects may be ſupplied from this General Account; that ſhe did not a little reſemble *Her*, who was the Pattern of all that is Good and Amiable in Womankind. SERM. VI.

Whether ſhe had this excellent Pattern in her Eye, I am not able to ſay, when, ſoon after her Marriage, ſhe declared to ſeveral Friends her Thoughts, that Every Woman of Quality was as much more Obliged, as ſhe was more Enabled than other Women, to do Good in the World; and that the ſhorteſt and ſureſt Way of doing this was, to endeavour, by all means, to be as good a Chriſtian, and as good a Wife, and as good a Friend, as was poſſible.

She endeavoured to be all this, and ſhe fell not far ſhort of it: for ſhe excelled in all the Characters that belonged to her,

SERM. VI. and was, in a great meaſure, equal to all the Obligations that ſhe lay under: She was devout, without Superſtition; ſtrict, without Ill-humour; good-natured, without Weakneſs; chearful, without Levity; regular, without Affectation. She was, to her Huſband the beſt of Wives, the moſt agreeable of Companions, and moſt faithful of Friends; to her Servants, the beſt of Miſtreſſes; to her Relations, extremely reſpectful; to her Inferiors, very obliging: and by all that knew her, either nearly, or at a Diſtance, She was reckoned, and confeſſed to be one of the beſt of Women.

And yet all this Goodneſs, and all this Excellence, was bounded within the Compaſs of eighteen Years, and as many Days; for no longer was ſhe allowed to live among us. She was ſnatched out of the World as ſoon almoſt as ſhe had made her Appearance in it; like a Jewel of high Price, juſt ſhewn a little, and then put up again; and we were deprived of her by that time We had learnt to value her. But Circles may be complete, tho' ſmall; the

the Perfection of Life doth not conſiſt in the Length of it: if it did, Our Saviour to be ſure would not have died ſo ſoon after Thirty. SERM. VI.

Short as her Life was, She had time enough to adorn the ſeveral States of Virginity and Marriage; and to experience the Sadneſs of a kind of Widowhood too; for ſuch ſhe accounted it, when her Lord was long abſent from her; mourned as much, and refuſed as much to be comforted, till his Return.

As her Life was ſhort, ſo her Death was ſudden; She was called away in haſte, and without any Warning. One day ſhe drooped, and the next ſhe died; nor was there the Diſtance of many Hours between her being very eaſy in this World, and very happy in another.

However, though ſhe was ſeized thus ſuddenly by Death, yet was ſhe not ſurprized; for ſhe was ever in Preparation for it; *her Loins girt* (as the Scripture ſpeaks) *and her Lamp ready trimmed, and burning*: The Moment almoſt that ſhe was taken ill, ſhe was juſt riſen from her Knees,

SERM. VI. Knees, and had made an End of her Morning Devotions. And to ſuch an One a ſudden Death could be no Misfortune. We pray, indeed, againſt it, becauſe few, very few, are fit for it; and the Church is to proportion her Forms to the Generality of Chriſtians: But where a Good Soul is in perfect Readineſs, there the ſooner the fatal Stroke is ſtruck, the better; all Delays in this Caſe, are uncomfortable to the Dying, as well as to thoſe Friends who ſurvive them.

In truth, ſhe could not be called away more haſtily, than ſhe was willing to go. She had been uſed ſo much to have *her Converſation in Heaven*, and her Soul had been ſo often upon the Wing thither, that it readily left its Earthly Station upon the leaſt Notice from Above; and took the very firſt Opportunity of quitting her Body, without lingering or expecting a ſecond Summons. She ſtayed no longer after ſhe was called, than to aſſure her Lord of her entire Reſignation to the Divine Will; and of her having no manner of Uneaſineſs upon her Mind; and to take

her Leave of him, with all the Expreſſions of Tenderneſs. When this was over, ſhe had nothing more to do with her Senſes; ſhe ſunk immediately under her Illneſs, and, after a ſhort unquiet Slumber, ſlept in Peace. SERM. VI.

Thus lived, and thus died this Excellent Lady, whoſe Character I have ſo far repreſented, as my Time, and the Meaſure of ſuch Diſcourſes as theſe, would ſuffer me; and endeavoured to renew a faint Image of her ſeveral Virtues and Perfections upon your Minds. I have done it in a confuſed manner, and without the nice Diviſions of Art; for Grief is not Methodical: It is enough, if I have been able to ſet before you ſome Reſemblance of her, tho' I ſhould not have done it after the beſt and livelieſt manner: When the *Life* is gone, a Picture drawn even by an unſkilful Hand, hath its Uſe and Value; and thoſe who loved what it doth (however unequally) repreſent, will be touched at the Sight of it.

You all are ſo, I queſtion not, touched by what hath been ſaid, in various Manners,

SERM. VI.

ners, and in different Degrees, as Your Relation to her was nearer, or remoter; as you knew more, or leſs of her. But you do not mourn alone; many *Living* there are, that do now, and many more there are, who ſhall hereafter, when her Character hath ſpread itſelf, *lay it to heart*. The World hath had a Loſs, as well as You; True Virtue and Piety have ſuffered in her Fall; and all, therefore, that have any Regard for theſe, ſhall bear a Part with You in your Sorrows.

The *True Servants of God* ſhall *lay it to heart*, who from their Souls deſire the Increaſe of Religion and Goodneſs, and know the Power and Influence of ſo ſweet, ſo winning, ſo perfect a Pattern as was ſet by Her; who promiſed Themſelves a mighty Countenance, and the World ſtrange Advantages, from her exemplary Sanctity and Goodneſs.

They that *miniſter in holy Things* will *lay it to heart*, to whom ſhe repaired, with ſo much Conſtancy and Seriouſneſs, to hear the Divine Oracles explained by them, and to *enquire the Law at their Mouths*.

Mouths. They will conſider what an Helper and Furtherer of their pious Labours they have loſt; and how much more lifeleſs and ineffectual their Diſcourſes are now likely to be, than they were heretofore, when ſhe encouraged thoſe Exerciſes by her Preſence, and taught others to attend, by the ſtrict Attention ſhe herſelf paid to what was ſaid in them. In whatever Congregation ſhe appeared, ſhe ſecretly raiſed and improved the Devotions of the Place; every Day of her Life preached up Goodneſs, as effectually as the moſt rational and moving Sermon. SERM. VI.

The *Enquirers into the Methods and Myſteries of Divine Providence* will *lay it to heart*. Why, will they ſay, when God hath moſt Work to do in the World, is one of the beſt and moſt faithful Inſtruments of his Glory called out of it? Why is ſhe ſnatched away from us, at a Time when we could leaſt have ſpared her? when Iniquity and Irreligion run high, and Piety is in Danger of growing out of Faſhion, and out of Countenance? Why, in ſuch a Juncture, is this *Good Lady* taken?

SERM. VI.

taken? And why are ſo many of her Sex, ſo unlike her, left? Is it in Mercy to her, or in Judgment to us? Is it becauſe She was too good to live here, or becauſe We were too wicked to deſerve her Company? *Righteous art Thou, O Lord, when we plead with Thee: yet let Us talk with Thee of thy Judgments!*

Her *Domeſtics* will *lay it to heart*, whom She ſhone upon always with a ſingular Goodneſs; who were near Witneſſes of her moſt retired Graces and Virtues; and had the beſt Opportunities of forming themſelves upon her admirable Model: and who will now (alas!) be deſtitute of her Example and Encouragement; of her ſweet Advice, and gentle Reproofs; and will be left to live upon that Stock of Virtue, which hath been happily laid in by them, that Meaſure of Goodneſs which They have already derived, from attending and obſerving Her.

Finally, the *Poor* will *lay it to heart*, whoſe Bowels ſhe refreſhed, and whoſe Wants ſhe relieved; and was ever their ſure

ſure Refuge and Support, their kind and merciful Patroneſs and Friend. SERM. VI.

But, above all, her *Relations* will *lay it to heart*; Thoſe, to whom ſhe was moſt nearly joined by Blood, or Love; and who had a more particular Intereſt in all her Virtues; They will lay their Hands on their Breaſts, *in the Day of Adverſity*, and *conſider*, How have we offended, that we are thus grievouſly puniſhed? and which of our Miſcarriages is it, that this heavy Inflict̃ion is intended to reform?

This is the wiſeſt and beſt Uſe that can be made of ſuch Solemnities as theſe; not, by the means of them, to excite our truly pious and Chriſtian Grief to an immoderate and unchriſtian Degree, nor *to ſorrow as Men without hope*; but to take Occaſion from thence, to ſearch and enquire into ourſelves; to learn the Meaning of theſe Divine Admonitions; and, after we have interpreted them truely, to reſolve upon obeying them.

The Deceaſed Perſon, whoſe Loſs we deplore, is happy without Queſtion: Happy will the Living be alſo, if they thus wiſely,

SERM. VI. wiſely, thus effectually *lay it to heart! It is better*, doubtleſs, *to go into the Houſe of Mourning, than into the Houſe of Feaſting*; but upon this Condition, that we come better out of the one, than out of the other: That we leave our Vanities and our Vices behind us; that we lay aſide our Affections towards this World, and our Indifference towards another; that we put on holy and hearty Reſolutions of being even Now, what we ſhall wiſh we had been, Hereafter, when the fatal Hour approaches; and of *living the Life* of this *Righteous* Perſon, that we may *die her Death* too; and be remembered and lamented, as ſhe is, by thoſe who ſurvive us.

Let us aſſure ourſelves, that the beſt way of doing Honour to her Memory will be, by making her Character ſtill live in Our Lives and Actions; that the trueſt Inſtance of our Love and Eſteem of Her is, to endeavour to be like Her: for Thus, we ſhall even add ſome farther Degrees of Happineſs and Honour to the vaſt Reward which ſhe is already entitled

to; and ſhall make the Crown of Glory, ſhe is to wear, bright as it will be, yet brighter, in the Day of General Retribution: Till when (it may be piouſly ſuppoſed) the Saints departed are not admitted to the *Fulneſs of Joy*, that, in the mean time, the Influence of their good Examples and good Deeds ſpreading far and wide, That too, when their Accounts are made up, may be taken into them; and the Fitneſs and Proportionableſs of their exceeding great Recompence, then beſtowed, may be manifeſted in the Sight of Angels and Men. SERM. VI.

Wherefore, *lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees!* Think not ſo much and ſo long on the incomparable Character of the Deceaſed, as to forget the true Uſe You are to make of this afflicting Accident; and to neglect thoſe good Improvements under it, which the Wiſe and Kind Inflicter expects at Your Hands. You have paid Your laſt Reſpects to Her, be not now wanting to Yourſelves; but *Gird up the Loins of Your Mind*, and be ye comforted!

SERM. VI.

The Conſideration of what ſhe was, which afflicts You, ſhould much rather Chear and Revive You: Had She not been ſo good a Woman, You would with more reaſon have bewailed her. But why ſhould You continue to mourn for One, who is entered upon a State of unſpeakable Joy? why ſhould You be dejected at Her Advancement?

She is gone to the Place where all Tears are wiped from her Eyes; where there is no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying: She is gone, and her Works have followed, and will follow her, to her great and Endleſs Advantage. God grant that, when We alſo follow her, we may do it with as little Surprize, and as much Chearfulneſs!

To Him, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, be aſcribed, as is moſt due, all Honour, Adoration, and Thanks, now, and for ever! Amen.

The Wiſdom of Providence manifeſted in the Revolutions of Government.

A

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable

HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT

St. *Margaret's*, *Weſtminſter*,

May the 29th, 1701.

Being the Anniverſary for the Reſtoration of King CHARLES the Second.

EZEK. xxxvii. 3.

And he ſaid unto me, Son of Man, can theſe Bones live? And I anſwered, O Lord God, thou knoweſt.

THESE Words are part of that Viſion of the *Valley of Bones*, wherein the Prophet *Ezekiel* doth, in a very lofty

SERM. VII. lofty and lively manner, ſet out the Loſt and Hopeleſs State of *Iſrael*, then under Captivity; and their future Recovery out of it, by the immediate Interpoſition of a Divine Power, contrary to all Human Probability and Appearance.

The Hand of the Lord was upon me, (ſays he, at the Entrance of this Chapter) *and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and ſet me down in the midſt of a Valley which was full of Bones:* i. e. the Spirit of God repreſented to my Imagination ſuch a Sight: *And* (as he goes on) *cauſed me to paſs by them round about; and, behold, there were Many in the open Valley, and, lo! they were very Dry:* i. e. they were as numerous as the Diſperſed of *Iſrael* in the Plains of *Meſopotamia*, and as deſtitute of lively Juice and Moiſture, as that Exiled People were of all hopes of Returning. *And he ſaid unto me, Son of Man, can theſe Bones live? And I anſwered, O Lord God, thou knoweſt:* i. e. Thou, that art the Author and Beſtower of Life, canſt doubtleſs reſtore it alſo, if thou will'ſt; and when thou will'ſt; but whether thou will'ſt

will'ſt pleaſe to reſtore it, or not, That Thou alone knoweſt. After which, the Spirit commands him to *Propheſy upon thoſe Bones*, and to ſay, *O ye dry Bones, hear the Word of the Lord*, together with what follows, in the two next Verſes. *And as I propheſied* (continued he) *there was a noiſe, and behold a ſhaking; and the Bones came together, Bone to his Bone*, And—*lo! the Sinews and the Fleſh came upon them, and the Skin covered them above:* And at laſt, *the Breath* alſo *came into them, and they lived, and ſtood up upon their Feet, an exceeding great Army.* Where we have, in the Prophetic way, an Aſſurance given to the *Jews*, that, though their Polity was now diſſolved, and their Tribes diſperſed, yet the time was coming, when the Providence of God would, in a wonderful Manner, work out their Deliverance and Return; re-unite the ſeveral Parts of their ſhattered Frame, and make that People live together once again under their own Laws, and in their own Country. 'Tis true, this Viſion hath, by ſome of the

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

Ancients, been underſtood of the *General Reſurrection*; and by others, of the *General Reſtoration of the Jews* before the Second Coming of *Chriſt*; and, perhaps, Both theſe Great Tranſactions might be glanced at in it, and remotely intended by it: For the Predictions of Scripture are generally ſo contrived, as to extend to more than one Event; ſo, as to be fulfilled at ſeveral Times, by ſeveral Steps and Degrees of Accompliſhment. However, That, which the Prophet had chiefly and moſt nearly in his View, was, the Recovery of the *Jewiſh* State from the Captivity which it then groaned under; and to That therefore the Viſion is, at the Cloſe of it, expreſly applied: *Son of Man, theſe Bones are the whole Houſe of Iſrael: behold, they ſay, our bones are dried, and our hope is loſt; we are cut off for our parts: therefore, propheſy and ſay unto them, Thus ſaith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cauſe you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the Land of Iſrael, and ye ſhall know that I am the Lord.*

The

The words of the Text, therefore, when taken together with the other parts of the Prophecy, to which they belong, carry in them this Conſideration, "That "God doth ſometimes interpoſe in be- "half of loſt States and Kingdoms, and "delights to manifeſt his Power and "Providence, in retrieving them from "Ruin, when they are as incapable of "Reſtitution by all Human means, as "dead and dry Bones are of recovering "their Vital Juice, and being compact- "ed again into a living Body." A Subject, fit every way to employ our Thoughts, at a Time, in which we are called upon to commemorate a *Revolution*, as ſurpriſing in its Manner, as happy in its Conſequences, as full every way of Wonder, and of all the Marks of a Divine Contrivance, as any Age, or Country (even this Country it ſelf, which hath experienced ſo many and great Viciſſitudes) can ſhew; and which, tho' placed in our Annals at ſome Diſtance from us, cannot yet be forgotten by us; as long as we feel the Influence, and reap

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

the Benefits of it; that is, as long as Regal Government, and the free Uſe of Parliaments, the Profeſſion of God's pure Religion, and the Enjoyment of our Ancient Laws and Liberties ſhall continue among us: And, if it can be forgotten with the Loſs of Theſe only, there is no good *Engliſhman* but will ſay, May the Memory of it always flouriſh!

Give me leave, therefore, to lay before you ſome Thoughts concerning the Wiſdom of Divine Providence, in interpoſing ſo particularly to bring about theſe mighty unexpected Turns of State; which it doth, doubtleſs, for many Wiſe Reaſons known only to that Infinite Mind which Steers the Courſe of ſuch great Actions: However, ſome there are, that lie open even to our narrow Apprehenſions. And,

1. The Providence of God concerns it ſelf in producing ſuch ſurpriſing Events, in order to have its Influence on Things below obſerved and acknowledged; which would go near to be forgotten, did he not,

not, by ſome remarkable Inſtances of his Interpoſition in Human Affairs, raiſe Men up at fit times, into a lively and vigorous Senſe of it. Though we know, that we Live, Move, and have our Being in God, that we are ſupported every Moment by his Power, and conducted in all our Actions by his unerring Wiſdom and Goodneſs; yet the Impreſſion which this Knowledge makes upon our Minds, is but faint, and is quickly effaced. His Concurring Influences in this Caſe are ſo ſecret, and ſo difficult to be diſtinguiſhed from the working of Natural and Moral Cauſes, that we are too apt to reſt in the Contemplation of theſe, without any recourſe to thoſe; and to reſolve all that happens to us, in our own Concerns, into the Power of ſuch Principles as lie neareſt to us. And, even in the greater and more Public Tranſactions of the World, when they go on in ſuch a manner, as to look like the Effects of Human Foreſight and Contrivance, we are apt to ſtop ſhort in our Reflexions upon them, without carrying our Thoughts up to that

SERM. VII. that inviſible Hand, which wields the vaſt Machine, and directs all its Springs and Motions. *Since the Fathers fell aſleep*, ſaid the Scoffers in St. *Peter*, *all things continue as they were*; and they were ready to infer, therefore, that all things went on of themſelves, without a Superior Power of Influence, or Controul them. But, when the great Scene of Government is ſhifted all at once, and the Cauſes, that viſibly contribute to the Production of this Effect, bear no Proportion to it; then we look out for others of a more extended Force; we perceive a Divine Providence intereſting itſelf in our Affairs, and adore the Footſteps of it. When theſe National Judgments, or Mercies of God are *abroad in the Earth, the Inhabitants of it will learn Righteouſneſs.* And that Leſſon of Divine Wiſdom then learnt, will be applyed by them to other Circumſtances, and on far different Occaſions. For when once a true Principle of Piety, and of a Religious Dependence on God is duly excited in us, it will operate beyond the particular Cauſe from whence it

ſprang, and give a general Turn and Tendency to all Thoughts and Reflexion; as One wiſe Rule of Behaviour, deeply imbibed, will be uſeful to us in hundreds of Inſtances, and ſpread its Influence throughout the whole Courſe and Conduct of our Lives and Actions. SERM. VII.

Since, therefore, we are ſo apt to forget God's Adminiſtration of the great Affairs below, when they go on evenly and regularly, he is pleaſed, I ſay, by Awakening Notices, now and then to put us in mind of it; to preſent to our View ſome aſtoniſhing Revolution of State, like a Glaring Comet, hung up in the Air, whoſe extraordinary Appearance, and Irregular Motion, ſhall ſooner lead our Thoughts up to the Author of Nature, and imprint a deeper Awe of him upon our Minds, than the Sight of the whole Hoſt of Heaven, in orderly Array continually moving round us.

Indeed, ſince the Age of Miracles ceaſed, as it did, when the Teſtimony of the Goſpel was fully Sealed, the chief way, in which God hath been pleaſed to give

SERM. VII. give Extraordinary Indications of his Power and Providence, hath been by ſuch *Signs of the Times*, ſuch Wonders of Government as theſe; which were not calculated, like other Miracles, for any particular Purpoſe or Period; but have been in the World as long as Kingdoms and Nations have been, and are to laſt together with them. And this ſuggeſts to us alſo, a

2*d* Reaſon of God's interpoſing ſo remarkably in the ſudden Depreſſing or Advancing of Kingdoms and States, becauſe this conduces to the Manifeſtation of his *Political* Juſtice, or of that Rule of Acting which he obſerves as the Great Governor and Lord of the World, towards Public Bodies and Communities of Men; and which is very different from that by which he Puniſhes the Sins, or Rewards the Virtues of Private Perſons. The Juſtice of his dealing with Particular Men may be manifeſted here, or hereafter, as he thinks fit; for their Duration is Eternal: And ſhould their

Succeſs-

Succeſsful Crimes, or Unmerited Afflictions be winked at in this World, it ſuffices, if ſuch Irregularities are ſet right in another. But, as the Societies, and Combinations of Men, which are of a ſhorter Date, another Rule muſt take place; they will at length be loſt and ſwallowed up in the Kingdom of the Lamb, and be made one Fold under one Shepherd, one People under one Lord, and Head, *Chriſt Jeſus:* And, therefore, the Juſtice of God's Adminiſtration, in regard to ſuch Communities, muſt be manifeſted either here, or not at all. For which Reaſon, I ſay, and that the Manifeſtation of it may be the more Glorious and Worthy of him, he ſometimes turns about the Affairs and Fortunes of States in a very wonderful manner, and makes himſelf to be known to be the *moſt High, that ruleth in the Kingdoms of Men.* Dan. iv. 17.

SERM. VII.

And from this Notion of God's Governing, or Political Juſtice, we may give ourſelves ſome Account why Temporal Felicities and Calamities are ſo often

SERM. VII.

often ſpoken of, and make ſuch a Figure in the Writings of *Moſes*, and the Prophets: For, under that Diſpenſation, God's Meſſengers addreſſed themſelves to the *Jews* generally, as to a Nation, or Civil Body of Men; and ſtirred them up to Virtue, therefore, or dehorted them from Vice, by ſuch Motives as were properly applicable to States and Communities. Whereas, in the Goſpel, we meet but few Paſſages, or Inſtructions of this kind; the Precepts of it being chiefly deſigned to improve the Morals, and regulate the Behaviour of Private Perſons, and to advance their Virtue to a Degree of Perfection, anſwerable in ſome Meaſure to the Gracious Diſcoveries then firſt imparted to them. But, as to the Conduct of Societies, or of particular Members in relation to them, little is ſaid; becauſe the Doctrine of the Law, and the Prophets, was ſo full in that Point, that there was no need of repeating Leſſons, there ſo often inculcated, and no room for improving upon them.

For

For this Reaſon, among others, may we ſuppoſe, that the *Jews* were ſo remarkably ſeparated from other Notions, and kept ſo entire within themſelves, by the expreſs Commands of God, and by a Fence of many Peculiar Rites and Ceremonies; and that the Hiſtory of the various and ſtrange Viciſſitudes they underwent, from their firſt Erection into a People, down to their Final Exciſion, is ſo punctually regiſtred and tranſmitted to us; that we might in Them, as in the Glaſs of Providence (if I may ſo ſpeak) diſtinctly ſee all the ſeveral Ways and Methods of God's dealing with great States and Kingdoms, and be fully inſtructed in the Rules of his raiſing, or depreſſing, proſpering, or puniſhing them, by the Interpoſition of a Divine Power, as Viſible almoſt as the Virtues, or Vices, that occaſioned it. But, SERM. VII.

3*dly*, It may afford us a farther Account of thoſe Unexpected Turns of State and Deliverances, which the Arm of God brings to paſs, if we conſider of what

SERM. VII. what Uſe they are, to baffle the miſtaken Policy of Men, and to diſcover the Vanity and Emptineſs of all thoſe Pretences to a deep and conſummate Wiſdom, which the falſly-wiſe of this World pleaſe themſelves in, and value themſelves upon.

Men of Ability and Experience in great Affairs, who have been long at the Helm, have hit oft in their Conjectures upon things, and have been very Proſperous in many of their Projects, are apt at laſt to give themſelves the Honour of all their Good Luck, and to grow vain upon it; ſaying proudly in their Heart, according to the Elegant Expreſſions of *Iſaiah*, *By the Strength of my Hand I have done it, and by my Wiſdom, for I am prudent; and I have removed the Bounds of the People, and have robbed their Treaſure, and I have put down their Inhabitants like a valiant Man. And my Hand hath found, as a Neſt, the Riches of the People; and as one gathereth Eggs that are left, have I gathered all the Earth; and there was none that moved the Wing,*

Iſa. x. 13, 14.

or

or opened the Mouth, or peeped. Thus they adore the goodly Scheme, by which they brought all theſe things to paſs, and reckon upon it as ſure and infallible, for the future; when nevertheleſs, it hath this one Terrible Defect, that God is left out of it: And therefore, he gives them often a convincing Proof of the Folly of it, by unravelling all their Meaſures at once, and blaſting all their Undertakings, and bringing about a new Scene of Things, through unheeded, unſuſpected Methods, which they could not foreſee with all their Skill, nor prevent by all their Prudence; that ſo *the Wiſe Man may* learn, *not to glory in his Wiſdom, and the mighty Man not to glory in his Might: but he that glorieth may glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth Me; that I am the Lord, which exerciſe loving Kindneſs, Judgment, and Righteouſneſs in the Earth; for in theſe things I delight, ſaith the Lord.* Were it not for ſuch ſurpriſing Revolutions of Affairs, which diſappoint the Devices of theſe Crafty ones, and make the Heads of the Ableſt and moſt

SERM. VII.

Jer. ix. 23, 24.

SERM. VII.

Experienced Lookers on, giddy at the Sight, God would, in the Opinion of many of his Creatures, be ſhut out from the Government of the World, and the Honour of his Conduct would be devolved upon ſome of the Mean and Subordinate Inſtruments of it; thoſe poor Inſects that ſit upon the Wheels of State, and imagine themſelves to be the Authors of all its Motions, and able to check, or to quicken them, at their Pleaſure.

There is yet a (*4th*) good Uſe, to which theſe great National Changes are ſubſervient (thoſe of them, eſpecially, which carry a People at once from the Extremity of Bad, to the Height of Good Fortune; ſuch as That we are now Met to Commemorate) and it is this; That the Belief of them tends to create and encourage a *National Piety*, and a Public Avowed Dependence upon God, in the greateſt Extremities. For, when once Men are firmly perſuaded, either from the Experience of what They themſelves have felt, or from the Aſſurance of what hath happened

happened to Others, that no People can be reduced to ſuch a wretched and forlorn Condition, but that the good Providence of God may, and will, if it ſees fit, come in to their Reſcue, and deliver them; even without Hope, and againſt Hope: I ſay, when this Opinion is once fixed in Mens Minds, it introduces preſently a Public Face of Religion amongſt them, and common Endeavours of Expreſſing their common Truſt and Dependance upon God; and it ties them together by the ſtricteſt Bands of Fraternal Love, Amity, and Union. Of this the *Jews* are a very Signal and Inſtructive Inſtance, under their ſeveral Captivities, and Diſperſions; where, tho' they were loſt to all human Hopes of Recovery, yet, having an Aſſurance of the known Favour and Protection of God towards their State, they perſiſted in the Strength of it, to wait for, and to expect their Deliverance; and had at thoſe times, ſuch a true Sincere Spirit of Piety ſtirring amongſt them, ſuch Zeal towards God, ſuch Unanimity amongſt themſelves, as they were utterly Strangers

SERM. VII.

SERM. VII.

to, upon Other Occaſions: Inſomuch that They, who, when at home, under the free Enjoyment of their Temple-Worſhip, were prone to all manner of Idolatry; when ſcattered into the Lands of Idols, where they had the Temptation ever near them, and before their Eyes, are obſerved never once to have complyed with it. And this very Principle it is, that ſtill ſupports and animates them, under this their Laſt and Greateſt Diſperſion, keeps them ſtill rigidly addicted to their Rites, and cloſely combined among themſelves, without mixing with any of the Nations among whom they dwell; under the Hopes, that God will, yet once more, as he hath often already done, make bare his Holy Arm in their Behalf, and reſtore the loſt State of *Iſrael*. Nay, even We ourſelves, who are now met to Worſhip God, were very lately an Inſtance of the Efficacy of ſuch Perſuaſions as theſe, towards raiſing up a diſſolute People into all the Heights of an Univerſal and Undiſſembled Piety. For when, in the Late Hour of Diſtreſs and Danger, our Conſtitution in Church

and

and State was Juſt ſinking under us, and the two greateſt Evils that belong to Human Nature, the Oppreſſion of our Liberties, and of our Conſciences, were ready to overtake us, and no Human Help that we could then ſee, was near; how yet did our Belief of the Over-ruling Power of God ſuſtain us with the Hopes that he would, in ſome Way, or other, own our Cauſe, ſupport our ſinking State, and work our Salvation for us? And how were we wrought upon by this Confidence, to turn to him with the utmoſt Unanimity and Earneſtneſs? What Zeal did we then expreſs for the Pure Religion of *Chriſt*? What Reverence towards his Prieſts? What Love towards one another? What good Reſolutions did we take up? What Solemn Vows did we make of living anſwerably to Our Holy Profeſſion? and, I believe, ſincerely meant (tho' by our Behaviour ſince, one would ſcarce think, we meant) to perform them? How were our Churches then filled with Crowds of Worſhipers? Our Altars ſurrounded by unuſual Numbers of Devout SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. Communicants? How were all Ranks and Conditions of Men Then remarkable for their Piety and Serioufneſs; as remarkable as they are now for their Indifference and Prophaneneſs? Doubtleſs, the Addreſſes, we then made to God for Relief, were actuated and enlivened by a Reflexion on the Surpriſing Bleſſings of this Day; and we were encouraged to hope that God, who had once before wonderfully reſtored our Conſtitution, even when it was loſt, would be prevailed with alſo, by a timely Application, to preſerve it from Ruin. And methinks, therefore, our Latter Deliverance ſhould not make the Former forgot; when the One of theſe was the Foundation of our aſking, and obtaining the Other. How know we, what Need we may Yet have of retreating to ſuch Conſiderations, and fortifying ourſelves with a Reflexion on ſuch Encouraging Precedents as theſe? And we do well, therefore, to cheriſh the Memory of them.

That we may do ſo, give me leave, in compliance with the Deſign of this Day and

and this Aſſembly, briefly to ſet before you, Firſt, The Greatneſs and Extent of that Public Bleſſing for which we think ourſelves obliged ſo long afterwards to pay our Public Thanks; and then (what my Text more particularly directs me to) the Extraordinary and Surpriſing manner in which it was conveyed to us. SERM. VII.

The Bleſſing was of itſelf Vaſt and Comprehenſive; for it took in all that was valuable and dear to us, either on a Religious, or Civil Account; and reſettled a ruined Church and Kingdom on that Firm Baſis, on which they ſtood, till violent and wicked Hands removed them; and on which may they ſtand for Ever! 'Tis natural for Men to think that Government the beſt, under which they drew their firſt Breath, and to propoſe it as a Model and Standard for all others. But, if any People upon Earth have a juſt Title thus to boaſt, 'tis We of this Iſland; who enjoy a Conſtitution, wiſely moulded, out of all the different Forms and Kinds of Civil Government, into ſuch an Excellent and Happy Frame, as contains

SERM. VII. in it all the Advantages of thoſe ſeveral Forms, without ſharing deeply in any of their Great Inconveniencies. A Conſtitution, nicely poized between the Extremes of too much Liberty, and too much Power; the ſeveral Parts of it having a proper Check upon each other: By the means of which they are all reſtrained, or ſoon reduced, within their due Bounds: And yet the peculiar Powers, with which Each is ſeparately inveſted, are ſure always, in Dangerous Conjunctures, to give way to the Common Good of the Whole. A Conſtitution, where the Prince is cloathed with a Prerogative, that enables him to do all the Good he hath a mind to; and wants no Degree of Authority, but what a Good Prince would not, and an Ill one ought not to have: Where he governs, tho' not Abſolutely, yet Glorioufly, becauſe he governs Men, and not Slaves; and is obeyed by them chearfully, becauſe they know that, in obeying Him, they obey thoſe Laws only which they themſelves had a Share in contriving. A Conſtitution, where

where the External Government of the Church is ſo cloſely interwoven with that of the State, and ſo exactly adapted to it, in all its Parts, as that it can flouriſh only, when That flouriſhes; and muſt, as it hath always hitherto done, decline, die, and revive with it. In a word, where the Intereſt of Prince and Subject, Prieſt and People, are perpetually the ſame; and the only fatal Miſtake, that ever happens in our Politics, is, when they are thought to be divided. SERM. VII.

It is objected indeed to this Admirable Model, that it is liable to frequent Struggles and Concuſſions within, from the ſeveral Interfering Parts of it: But this, which is reckoned the Diſeaſe of our Conſtitution, may rather be thought a Mark of its Soundneſs, and the chief Security of its Continuance. For 'tis with Governments exactly contrived, as with Bodies of a nice Frame and Texture; where, the Humours being evenly mixed, every little Change of the Proportion introduces a Diſorder, and raiſes that Ferment which is neceſſary to bring all right again;

SERM. VII.

again; and which thus preſerves the Health of the Whole, by giving early Notice of whatever is noxious to any of the Parts: Whereas in Governments, as well as Bodies of a coarſer Make, the Diſeaſe doth often not begin to ſhew itſelf till it hath infected the whole Maſs, and is paſt a Cure; and ſo, tho' they are diſordered later, yet they are deſtroyed much ſooner. Accordingly we know that, under this Diſadvantage, if it be one, our Conſtitution hath now laſted pretty Entire through many Ages: For, excepting the ſhort Interruptions which *Conqueſt* gave (which, however, have not been either ſo Many, or ſo Great, as ſome would make them) it hath continued much the ſame, in the main Parts and Branches of it, from the earlieſt Times of our *Saxon* Anceſtors, down to theſe Days. A clear Proof, that it is a Government ſuited every way to our Temper, and to our Clime; that it is perfectly made for Us, and We for It: And that God, therefore, never puniſhes us more ſorely, than when he deprives us of it for a time; nor ever confers

fers a greater Bleſſing upon us, than when he reſtores it—

SERM. VII.

As he did on this happy Day; when, after the Confuſions of a Long Civil War, attended with the Deſtruction of an Excellent Church, the Murther of a Gracious Prince, and the Grievous Tyranny of our Fellow Subjects, he was pleaſed at length to give us back again, what we had ſo lightly departed from, our Old *Engliſh* Government and Laws; and, together with them, what we before boaſted of in Name only, the True Liberty of the Subject, and the real Freedom and Honour of Parliaments. And to this Day, therefore, we owe all the Benefits we have ſince reaped from the Regal Adminiſtration, all the Peace, Plenty, and Happineſs, we have enjoyed, or our Poſterity after us ſhall enjoy, under it.

To the Influence of this Day it is owing, that we have now at the Head of our Troops, and our Councils, a Prince, who hath happily joined together the Extremes of Martial and Political Virtues; and knows

SERM. VII. knows as well how to Govern a Free People by their own Laws and Cuſtoms, as to Command Legions: Who, whether in the Cabinet, or in the Field, is ſtill equally in his Sphere; and is always indifferent, therefore, either to War, or Peace, any further than the One, or the Other, ſhall conduce to the Good of his People, and the General Intereſt of Mankind.

Nay, to this Day it is owing, That that Great Aſſembly, before which I ſtand, are, under the Auſpicious Conduct of our Prince, Arbiters of the Fate, and Governors of the Balance of *Europe:* That their Reſolves have as wide an Influence, as the Firmeſt Leagues and Confederacies; and their very Counſels are more Formidable than the Hoſtile Preparations of Others: So that They, who lately felt the Weight of the *Engliſh* Arms, will be afraid of entering upon ſuch Meaſures as may awaken Your Reſolution of once again taking them up; ſaying within themſelves, according to the Expreſſions of the Enlightened Patriarch; *Judah is a Lion's Whelp, he hath gone up from the*

Gen. xlix. 9.

the Prey, He Stooped down, he Couched as a Lion, and as an Old Lion; Who ſhall rouze him up? SERM. VII.

The Bleſſing, therefore, we Commemorate, was Great; and it was made yet greater by the Way in which God was pleaſed to convey it to us: For he did it in ſuch a Manner, as to ſhew, that He was the Sole Author of it, and that it ſprang not from Human Writ, or Contrivance. He did it, after our Forefathers were reduced to Extremities, and had tired themſelves by Various Attempts to bring this great End about, and had been baffled in all of them, and ſat down at laſt in deſpair of effecting it. Then was it time for him to appear for our Redemption, and to give Himſelf the Glory of it. All was Darkneſs about them, without Form, and void; when the Spirit of God moved upon the Face of this Abyſs, and ſaid, *Let there be Light, and there was Light:* And both God and Man *ſaw that this Light was Good*; the One, rejoicing in his Own Gift; and the Other, bleſſing and magnifying the Beſtower of it. 'Tis true,

SERM. VII.

true, the Reaſoners of this World, who love to ſolve every Event, without any Recourſe to a Divine Power, will be ready to point out ſeveral Cauſes, which helped forward this End, and ſmoothed the way towards it. But though there were many ſuch, yet, it muſt be owned, that All of them put together were not of Force enough to produce the Effect; nor, particularly, to account for that Univerſal Bent and Inclination of the People of all Ranks, Intereſts, and Opinions, which, upon the firſt Opening of this wonderful Scene, at once diſcovered itſelf; and which could proceed from Him alone, who hath the Hearts of all Men in his Hand, and turneth them whitherſoever he liſteth.

Alas! When Man is to influence Man, in order to bring about ſuch Mighty Changes as theſe, the Work goes on but ſlowly. 'Tis hard to Unite in any Common Meaſures all the ſeveral little Sects and Parties, into which a Nation is crumbled; their Interfering Intereſts, Paſſions, and Prejudices will obſtruct the beſt-

beſt-laid Deſign: What it gains in one Place, it will loſe in another; and never, but by the Intervention of a Superior Power, ſucceed Univerſally. But when God once comes into ſuch a Work, it ripens apace; all Obſtructions preſently ceaſe, all Difficulties vaniſh. As the Tops of Corn bend this way, or that, before the Wind; ſo are the various Minds of the Multitude ſwayed and inclined by the Inward Breathings of his Spirit. SERM. VII.

It is worth obſerving, therefore, in the Viſion of *Ezekiel*, from whence my Text is drawn, how, even after *the Sinews and the Fleſh were come up upon the Dry Bones, and the Skin had covered them above*, yet ſtill it is ſaid, that *there was no Breath in them*; and ſtill, therefore, the Prophet is commanded to *propheſy to the four Winds*, and to bid them *breathe upon thoſe ſlain, that they might live:* And then, and not till then it was, that *the Breath came into them, and they lived, and ſtood upon their Feet, an exceeding great Army.* The Meaning of which is, that in every ſudden Revo-

SERM. VII. lution of State, though there be many viſible Diſpoſitions and Cauſes, that concur to favour it, yet ſtill the laſt Finiſhing Turn is always from God; who animates and invigorates the whole Deſign, puts all its Parts at once into Motion, and removes all Impediments.

Thus he effected the Deliverance of this Day; by opening at once the Eyes of a Deluded People, ſhewing them their True Intereſt, and inſpiring them with Unanimity and Zeal to purſue it; and in order to it, allaying their Mutual Heats, leſſening their Prejudices, and ſoftening their Averſions. *The Wolf* he made *to dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard to lie down with the Kid*; that is, the moſt Oppoſite Tempers were brought to conſpire peaceably in this Great Event, the moſt Divided Intereſts were reconciled in it: And even They, who were prepared to Propheſy againſt it, were yet, by an Over-ruling Influence, determined to pronounce a Bleſſing; and forced, as they looked on, to take up their Parable, and ſay, *God hath*

hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he ſeen Perverſeneſs in Iſrael; the Lord his God is with him, and the Shout of a King is among them. God hath brought them out of Egypt; he hath, as it were, the Strength of an Unicorn. Surely, there is no Inchantment againſt Jacob, neither is there any Divination againſt Iſrael: According to this time it ſhall be ſaid of Jacob, and of Iſrael, What hath God wrought? SERM. VII. Numb. xxiii. 21, 22, 23.

Since the Work, therefore, was His, let us give Him the Praiſe of it! Even as we do, by this Solemn Appearance: falling low on our Knees before his Footſtool, and ſaying, *Not unto Us, O Lord, not unto Us*, nor unto our Forefathers, *but unto Thy Name give Glory; for thy Mercy and for thy Truth's Sake!* For thy *Mercy's Sake*, which induced thee to give ſo happy a Turn to the Affairs of ſo Undeſerving a People; and for thy *Truth's Sake*, which thou intendeſt to ſecure and to re-eſtabliſh by the Means of it. Pſ. cxv. 1.

Let us piouſly aſcribe this, and all other our Deliverances to God, and all our Calamities to Ourſelves; acknow-

SERM. VII. ledging the One to be as properly the Conſequence of our Sins, as the Other is the Reſult of his Unmerited Favour and Goodneſs. And let us from ſuch ſurpriſing Events as theſe, which have confeſſedly ſomething Divine in them, learn to lift up our Thoughts above Material Cauſes, and to inſtruct ourſelves in all the Amazing Leſſons of God's Governing Providence; by which he holds the Balance of Nations, and inclines it which way he pleaſes; ſo that *all the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing* to him, *and he doth according to his Will in the Army of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, and none can ſtay his Hand, or ſay unto him, What doſt thou?*

Dan. iv. 35.

And this he now performs by the Adminiſtration of the Man *Chriſt Jeſus*; to whom, immediately upon his Reſurrection, he gave all Power, in Heaven, and in Earth; and whom, upon his *Aſcent* into Heaven (the Holy Subjects alſo of this Day's Solemnity) he inſtated in the full Poſſeſſion and Exerciſe of that Power;

Power; declaring him King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. And, indeed, *Worthy is the Lamb that was ſlain, to receive Power, and Riches, and Wiſdom, and Strength, and Honour, and Glory, and Bleſſing.* Therefore, *Bleſſing and Honour, and Glory and Power, be unto him that ſitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever!* SERM. VII. Rev. v. 12, 13.

The Duty of Public Interceſſion and Thankſgiving for Princes.

A

SERMON

Preached before the Honourable

HOUSE of COMMONS,

AT

St. *Margaret's*, *Weſtminſter*,

On *Wedneſday*, *March* 8, 1703-4.

Being the Day of Her MAJESTY's Happy Acceſſion to the THRONE.

1 TIM. ii. 1, 2, 3.

I Exhort, That, firſt of all, Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men; for Kings, and all that are in Authority; that we may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty: For this is Good and Acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.

THERE was nothing by which the Enemies of Chriſtianity endeavoured, and hoped ſo much to retard the

SERM. VIII.

SERM. VIII. Progreſs of it, as by repreſenting to Princes and Rulers, that the Propagation of this Doctrine tended to ſubvert their Government; that the Spreaders of it, where-ever they came, *exceedingly troubled Cities*, and *turned the World upſide down*. It behoved the Apoſtles, therefore, to guard againſt this Objection with all imaginable Care. As they knew, that the great Work, in which they were employed, was not, as yet, to be promoted, or countenanced by the Powers of this World; ſo they reſolved to give them no juſt Ground, or Colour to obſtruct it: and wiſely, therefore, took all Occaſions to declare their Abhorrence of ſuch as *deſpiſed Dominion, and ſpake Evil of Dignities*; frequently preſſed upon their new Converts the Duties of paying *Honour*, and *Fear*, and *Tribute* to the *Higher Powers*; [as being *the Ordinance of God*] and of *ſubmitting themſelves* to them, *not only for Wrath, but alſo for Conſcience Sake*. And, for this Reaſon, it may be preſumed that St. *Paul* introduceth his Inſtructions to *Timothy*, the new Biſhop

Jude 8.

ſhop of *Epheſus*, by *Exhorting him*, that, in order to a due Diſcharge of his high Truſt, he ſhould *firſt of all*, or, above all things, take care, that *Supplications, Prayers, Interceſſions, and giving of Thanks be made for all Men*; eſpecially *for Kings, and all that are in Authority; that we may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs, and Honeſty: For this*, ſays he, *is Good, and Acceptable in the Sight of God, our Saviour.* SERM. VIII.

The Exhortation hath a double Aſpect, on Mankind in general, and on Princes and Rulers in particular. I ſhall conſider it, with regard to the Latter of theſe only, for whoſe Sake the Apoſtle ſeems chiefly to have made it; and under this View, it ſuggeſts to us Three Heads of Diſcourſe, very proper to be handled on this Day, and in this Aſſembly.

I. It recommends a great Duty to us, the Duty of *making Supplications, Prayers, and Interceſſions*, and of *giving Thanks, for Kings, and all that are in Authority.* I.

SERM. VIII.

II. It expreſſes the general Reaſon, and Ground of that Duty: *For this is Good and Acceptable in the Sight of God, our Saviour.*

III. III. It quickens us to the Exercise of it by a ſpecial Motive, drawn from the Conſideration of our own Eaſe, Advantage, and Happineſs; *That we may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.*

Theſe Points I ſhall firſt conſider, and explain, in that Latitude, with which the Apoſtle hath propoſed them; and then adapt the general Argument to the particular Occaſion of this Day's joyful Solemnity.

I. The Writers on this Place have diſtinguiſhed with ſome Exactneſs between *Supplications*, *Prayers*, and *Interceſſions*, and endeavoured to give us the ſtrict and proper Senſe of each of theſe Words; which, I think, it is neither neceſſary, nor eaſy

to determine. Sure we are, that by All these together the Apoſtle intended to expreſs the Petitionary Part of our Devotions; and by *giving of Thanks*, the other Part, which conſiſts of Hymns and Praiſes. Theſe two compriſe the whole of our Religious Service; and in both theſe ways we are exhorted to addreſs ourſelves to God, *for Kings, and all that are in Authority*, i. e. for the Supreme Magiſtrate, and all Inferior and Subordinate Governors. SERM. VIII.

Ancient and Modern Interpreters agree to underſtand this Paſſage of the Public Offices, or Devotions of the Church: and, indeed, the Epiſcopal Character of *Timothy*, to whom the Exhortation is addreſſed; the Inſtructions which immediately follow, and manifeſtly relate to the ſame Head of Public Worſhip: and the profeſſed Deſign of St. *Paul* in writing this Epiſtle, which was, to inſtruct *Timothy*, *How he ought to behave himſelf in the Houſe of God*; do, I think, naturally and neceſſarily determine us ſo to underſtand it: Eſpecially, if we conſider, 1 Tim. iii. 15.

that

SERM. VIII.

that the Exhortation, thus underſtood, was agreeable to the Practice of the *Jewiſh* Church; the Pattern, which, in Matters of Worſhip, Diſcipline, and Government, the Apoſtles chiefly followed: And, accordingly, we find the Earlieſt Apologiſt for Chriſtianity repreſenting it as the Conſtant and known Uſage of the Firſt Chriſtians, in all their Sacred Aſſemblies, to Pray for the Lives of their Emperors, and for the Proſperity of their State and Government.

Our Church is in this, as in other Reſpects, truly Primitive; for thus we pray daily in her Liturgy. And what we do every Day, we may, at ſome times, be allowed to perform more devoutly and ſolemnly; even as often as the Courſe of the Year ſhall bring on that Happy Day, when her Majeſty firſt began to Reign on the Throne of her Anceſtors, and in the Hearts of her Subjects, and to refreſh this Church, and State, with the kind Influences of her Mild and Gracious Adminiſtration. Whenever this Annual Seaſon of Joy returns, a lively and affecting Senſe of

of the Mercies it conveyed to us, cannot SERM. but return with it: which we have no VIII. better way of expreſſing, than by Offering up to God (as now we do, and are by St. *Paul* exhorted to do) our Devouteſt Thanks for the Bleſſings we already feel, and our moſt earneſt Prayers for the Continuance and Increaſe of them.

The Reaſon and Ground of which Duty is thus, in the

Second Place, expreſſed: *For this is* II. *Good and Acceptable in the Sight of God, our Saviour.* It is *Good*, i. e. highly Decent, Expedient, and Reaſonable in itſelf; and, therefore, *Acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour*; a Performance particularly well pleaſing to Him, by whom Kings Reign, of whoſe Power they partake, and whoſe *Image and Superſcription* they bear. Let us take a diſtinct View of the ſeveral Springs, from whence our Obligation to this Duty may be ſuppoſed to ariſe. And,

1*ſt*, Our

SERM. VIII.

1*ſt*, Our Applications to God in behalf of the Princes and Rulers of this World are highly reaſonable, as they are Proper Expreſſions of our Good-Will to Mankind, whoſe Fate is in their Hands, and whoſe Welfare in great meaſure depends upon their Actions and Conduct. Sovereign Princes and States, are the Chief Inſtruments, which the Providence of God employs, in his Adminiſtrations here below, and by which he brings about all thoſe Mighty Events, that fix, or unſettle the Peace of the World. When theſe great Wheels move irregularly, the whole Machine of State is preſently rendered unſerviceable, and numberleſs depending Motions are either ſtopped, or diſordered.

The Execution of all Laws is entruſted with Them; and Laws are the Source of every Advantage that redounds to Mankind from Society, which, without them, would not be preferable to Solitude. To the Influence of theſe it is owing, that we can call any Thing our Own, even Life itſelf; and are ſheltered from

from the Attacks, which the Luſts and Paſſions of Men, not reſtrained by the Principles of Reaſon and Religion, would be every Day making upon us; That we are poliſhed in our Manners, and bred up in all the Arts of Civil Life, which can render us Uſeful, or Agreeable to each other: and, chiefly, that we have Opportunities of thus appearing before God, and praiſing him in the Great Congregation; of hearing his Everlaſting Goſpel expounded to us, and being directed in all thoſe Paths of Piety and Virtue, which lead to Peace in this World, and to Everlaſting Life in the next. SERM. VIII.

"Of Law" (ſaid the excellent Mr. *Hooker* long ſince, with a Compaſs of Thought, and a Force of Words peculiar to him; Of Law) "no leſs can be acknowledged, than that her Seat is in "the Boſom of God; her Voice, the "Harmony of the World; that all things "in Heaven, and Earth, do her Homage; "the very Leaſt, as feeling her Care, "and the Greateſt, as not exempt from "her Power; both Angels, and Men, and

SERM. VIII. "and Creatures, of what kind ſoever, "though Each, in different Sort and "Manner, yet All, with one Uniform "Conſent, admiring her as the Mother "of their Peace and Joy." He, therefore, upon whoſe Authority, and Will, the Obſervation of Human Laws depends, hath the Happineſs, or Miſery of Mankind in his Power; *the Earth, and all the Inhabitants thereof*, would be *diſſolved*, did not ſuch Perſons *bear up the Pillars of it*.

Pſ. lxxv. 3.

Nay, even the Example of Princes, is, itſelf a Living Law to their Subjects, which faſhions them by Degrees into a Likeneſs of Manners, and ſpreads its Influence inſenſibly, but powerfully, thro' Cities, and Kingdoms.

So that, to make Supplications for Kings, that their Government may be Wiſe, Juſt, and Proſperous, is, to pray at once for all the Temporal Felicities which can accrue to us; a good Reign being the moſt Univerſal and Comprehenſive Bleſſing, which either Man can aſk, or God beſtow; and for which we

"have

have as much Reaſon to be Thankful as for the Light of the Sun, for Temperate Weather, and Fruitful Seaſons. SERM. VIII.

Even an Ill Prince cannot help doing a great deal of Good, by preſerving ſome Degree of Order and Government in the World; and, therefore, even Such an One hath a Title to our Prayers, and Thankſgivings. But, when Virtue aſcends the Throne, it diſpenſes Bleſſings without Number, and without Meaſure; and ſpreads its Influence on all around, and beneath it: *Its going forth is from the End of a Kingdom, and its Circuits to the Ends of it, and there is nothing hid from the Heat thereof.* Pſ. xix. 6. *Happy are the People that are in ſuch a Caſe*; They have great Reaſon to Bleſs, who are thus Bleſſed of the Lord. But,

2*dly*, As the Virtues and Vices of thoſe who Govern, operate on all Inferior Ranks of Men, in the way of Natural Cauſes, ſo have they another, and a more Extraordinary Effect; inaſmuch as God doth often take Occaſion to Reward

or

SERM. VIII.

or Puniſh a People, not only by the Means of Good, or Ill Princes, but even for the Sake of them. Plain Inſtances of this kind we have recorded in Scripture; particularly, where Subjects have ſuffered for the Iniquities of thoſe who were ſet over them, and the Vengeance, Merited by the One, hath been Inflicted, and, as it were, Transferred on the Other. Whether it be, that the good or ill Conduct of Rulers is ſometimes Owing to their People, and may, therefore, juſtly be imputed to them; or whether (as in the Caſe of Viſiting the Sins of Parents on their Children) by making them mutually liable to the Conſequences of each Other's Actions, God intends to imprint a mutual Concern and Endeavour for each Other's Welfare, and to Unite them together in the ſtricteſt Bands of Intereſt, and Affection: Whatever the Reaſon of God's dealing in this manner with Princes and States may be, ſure we are, that he doth thus deal with them, and that this is one Chief Article in that Scheme of Political Juſtice, by which

which he Governs the World. And can there be a better Argument for our Interceding with God in the behalf of *Kings, and all that are in Authority*, than This, That we are really at ſuch times interceding for ourſelves? Since We may be chaſtiſed for Their Tranſgreſſions, and reap the Rewards of Their Piety and Goodneſs? Further, SERM. VIII.

3*dly*, The Cares of Empire are great, and the Burthen, which lies upon the Shoulders of Princes, very weighty; and, on This Account, therefore, they Challenge, becauſe they particularly want, our Prayers, that they may *have an Underſtanding Heart, to diſcern between Good and Bad, and to go out and in before a great People.* With what Difficulties is their Adminiſtration often clogged by the Perverſeneſs, Folly, or Wickedneſs of thoſe they govern? How hard a thing do they find it, to inform themſelves truly of the State of Affairs; where Fraud and Flattery ſurround, and take ſuch Pains to miſlead them? How Nice a Taſk is it, to diſtinguiſh between the Extremes of al-

SERM. VIII.

lowing too much Liberty, and affecting too much Power? To what Daily Dangers are their Perſons expoſed, from the Attempts of Treachery, and Violence? How particular and preſſing are the Temptations, to which the Height of Power, they have attained, makes them liable? They are above the Reach of Fear, Reproof, and moſt of thoſe Outward Checks, which God has placed, as Guards upon private Mens Virtue; and are, on that Account, in great Danger of letting looſe their Appetites and Paſſions in all manner of Exceſſes, without an Extraordinary Degree of God's Reſtraining Grace; which, therefore, it becomes, and concerns us to beg of Him, and for Them.

Chriſtian Charity and Beneficence is a Debt which we owe to our Kings, as well as to the Meaneſt of their Subjects. But how ſhall we extend our Good Offices to Thoſe, who move in ſo high a Sphere? how, but by applying ourſelves to One, that is yet higher than They, even our Common Lord and Maſter; and humbly implore

implore the Aids of his good Spirit, to Comfort, Support, and Guide them? This is the only Compenſation, or Return, which moſt of us are capable of making to them, for their Vigilance and Concern for the Public Safety, the Pains which they take, and the Hazards which they run to ſecure it. SERM. VIII.

And, to encourage our Requeſts in their behalf, we may conſider, in the

4*th* Place, That the Providence of God doth, in a very particular Manner, interpoſe towards ſwaying the Will and Affections, directing, or over-ruling the Intentions of thoſe who ſit at the Helm: for *the King's Heart is in the Hand of God, as the Rivers of Waters; He turneth it whitherſoever he liſteth:* He gives a Bent to it, this way, or that; which it takes as certainly, and eaſily as a Stream is derived into the Channels, which the Hand of the Workman prepares for it. On this Foundation our Church profeſſes to build the Duty, and the Expedience of praying for Princes: *We are taught* (ſays She) *by thy Holy Word, that the Hearts* Prov. xxi. 1.

SERM. VIII. *of Kings are in thy Rule and Governance, and that thou doſt diſpoſe and turn them, as it ſeemeth beſt to thy godly Wiſdom.* Indeed, the Spirit of God operates on the Spirits of all Men; but not in ſo Copious, ſo Powerful, and Extraordinary a manner, as it doth on the *Spirits of Princes*, which God delighteth to *reſtrain*, and, by that means, to ſhew himſelf *Wonderful among the Kings of the Earth.* It is the chief Care, the peculiar Province, the great Prerogative of the King of Kings, to rule the Thoughts of Thoſe, who rule the Actions of Others; and thereby to bring about the Ends, the myſterious and inſcrutable Ends, of his Providence. And, 'tis well for Mankind that there is a Being, who hath, and exerciſeth, ſuch a Power; for unleſs there were, Human Power, left to itſelf, would make wild work in the World; the Chariot of Government would be often, and dangerouſly miſguided by Raſh Unſkilful Drivers, did not an Inviſible Hand hold the Reins, and gently direct the Courſe of it.

The

The Scripture ſeems to intimate, that God hath appointed Tutelar Angels, to act under him, for this Purpoſe; at leaſt, that ſuch Miniſtring Spirits there were, before the Erection of the Mediatorial Kingdom of our Saviour: For, in *Daniel*, we read of Particular Princes, or Patrons, aſſigned, from the Angelic Hoſt, to the *Grecians*, and *Perſians*; in order, as is piouſly believed, to Encourage, Enlighten, and Protect the Governors of thoſe Eſtates and Empires. We are intereſted more nearly in the Welfare and good Conduct of Princes than thoſe Miniſtring Spirits are; ſhall we not have ſome ſhare in procuring it? Ought we not with our utmoſt Zeal to aſſiſt thoſe, whom God, for our ſakes, vouchſafes in ſo eminent a Manner to direct, and aſſiſt? And, what better way of aſſiſting them have we, than by our *Supplications and Thankſgivings?* Which, let me add, in the SERM. VIII.

Laſt Place, are never, on this Occaſion, ſo becomingly and forcibly addreſſed to God, as in the great Congregation. Bleſſings of a public Nature and Influ-

SERM. VIII.

ence require as Public and Solemn Acknowledgements; and the proper Way of obtaining Mercies, which affect Many, is, by pouring out the Joint-Requeſts of Many in behalf of them: For in the Spiritual, as well as the Carnal Warfare, Numbers are moſt likely to prevail. The Ancients therefore repreſent the Strength of ſuch United devotions by that of an Army, encompaſſing, beſieging God; not to be defeated, or reſiſted by him. *Coimus ad Deum* (ſaith one of them) *ut, quaſi Manu factâ, Precationibus eum ambiamus; hæc Vis Deo grata eſt:* "We come toge-"ther in Troops, as it were, and ſur-"round God with our Prayers; this "Violence of ours is well-pleaſing to "him." We then Aſk, and we Then give Thanks, with the greateſt Alacrity and Earneſtneſs, and, conſequently, with the ſureſt Hope of Acceptance, and Succeſs, when we excite and warm each other into this Holy Performance; and, with One Heart, and One Mouth, utter the Awakening Words which the Devout Plaſmiſt uſed, at a Solemnity like This, which

Tertullian.

which we are now met to celebrate: *This is the Day which the Lord hath made; let us be glad, and rejoice in it. Help now, O Lord; O Lord, ſend us now Proſperity. God is the Lord, who hath ſhewed us Light: Bind the Sacrifice with Cords, yea, even to the Horns of the Altar.* SERM. VIII.

III. I have explained the Grounds and Reaſons of the Duty, intimated to us in thoſe Words of the Text: *For this is Good, and Acceptable in the Sight of God our Saviour.* I proceed to conſider the ſpecial Motive there propoſed, to quicken us into the Exerciſe of it: *That* ſo *we may lead a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.* I ſhall briefly ſhew, in what Reſpects the Devotions recommended by the Apoſtle contribute to this End; and how far, therefore, our Own Eaſe, Advantage, and Happineſs is concerned in paying them. And,

1*ſt*, They have a plain Tendency this way, as they are a prevailing Argument with God ſo to diſpoſe and incline the Minds of Princes, that they may ſtudy

SERM. VIII. to promote the Quiet, Good, and Proſperity of their Kingdoms. If we believe our Prayers to have any Effect, we cannot doubt their Uſefulneſs in this Particular; which is too evident to need a further Enlargement.

2*dly*, Such Prayers facilitate our *leading a Quiet and Peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty*; inaſmuch as they expreſs, in the moſt ſignificant manner, our Love, and Zeal, and Reverence towards the Perſons of Princes: And by ſuch Inſtances of Duty invite them to make us ſuitable Returns. They effectually prevent thoſe Jealouſies, which Men cloathed with Sovereign Power are too apt to entertain of their Inferiors; and promote that good Underſtanding between them, which is the Common Intereſt, and ſhould be the Common Aim of Both; and wherein the Security, and Happineſs of all well-ordered States chiefly conſiſts. The Holy Wiſhes and Vows we make for Their Welfare will engage their unwearied Endeavours for Ours; and the Thankſgivings put up by us for the

the Tranquillity we enjoy under their Reign, will move them to afford us freſh and frequent Occaſions for New ones. SERM. VIII.

Particularly, the Church is in This way beſt capable of giving Aid and Aſſiſtance to the State; and by that means, of deſerving, and ſecuring its Protection and Favour. This is the Spiritual *Tribute* and *Cuſtom*, which ſhe pays to the *Supreme* Magiſtrate; and for which ſhe receives, in Exchange, all the Temporal Bleſſings and Encouragement, that flow from the Munificence of Princes, and make her not only to Subſiſt, but Flouriſh.

3*dly*, *A Quiet and Peaceable Life* is the Fruit of theſe Public Devotions; as We ourſelves derive from thence a Spirit of Meekneſs, Submiſſion, and Reſpect to our Superiors, and are led into an Habitual Love and Practice of thoſe Mild Graces and Virtues, which we, at ſuch times, ſolemnly exerciſe, and pray God to inſpire us with; and which, when generally practiſed, make Crowns ſit eaſy on the Heads of Princes, and render Them,

and

SERM. VIII. and their Subjects, equally a Bleſſing to Each Other. Such as ſincerely pray for the Proſperity of a State, are not likely to diſturb it themſelves, or to puſh on others into Attempts againſt the Peace of it: They come out of the Church, ſtill more Devoted to their Prince, and Country, than they went in; more Zealous, and better Qualified to diſcharge their Duty to the Public, in their ſeveral Places and Stations.

IV. I have ſufficiently explained the Exhortation of St. *Paul*, and the General Arguments, and Motives, by which he enforceth it. The beſt way of cloſing, and applying theſe Reflexions will be, to take a View of the Character of thoſe Princes, on whoſe behalf the Apoſtle preſſeth on the Chriſtians of his Time the Practice of this Duty, and from thence to ſhew, how much ſtronger Obligations We are under of complying with it. And

Eph. ii. 12. 1*ſt*, The Princes, for whom the Apoſtle pleads, were Infidels, *without Chriſt, Aliens*

Aliens from his Commonwealth, and Strangers from the Covenants of his Promiſe; and ſuch alſo they were, by the Permiſſion of God, to continue for Three Hundred Years after the Coming of our Saviour; that ſo his Goſpel might not owe its firſt Eſtabliſhment, in any Degree to the Secular Powers; but might ſpread and fix itſelf every where, without their Help, and againſt their Will; and manifeſt to all the World its Divine Original, by the Miraculous Manner in which it ſhould be propagated. The Kings of the Earth were not, during this Period, to promote the Belief of the Goſpel, any otherwiſe than by Oppoſing it. When the reſt of the World had come in, and owned our Saviour, Then, and not till Then, were the Rulers of it to ſubmit their Sceptres to the Sceptre of Chriſt, to Embrace, Protect, and Encourage his Doctrine, but not to Plant it; that, in This Senſe alſo, the Prediction of our Lord concerning the Progreſs of his Kingdom, and the Call of Believers, might be

SERM. VIII. be verified, that *the Laſt of* Men *ſhould be Firſt; and the Firſt, Laſt.*

Matt. xx. 16.

If then, the Tribute of *Supplications and Thankſgivings* was due to thoſe Heathen Princes, is it not much more due to thoſe who are Chriſtians? who are ingrafted, as Principal Members, into that Myſtical Body, of which *Chriſt Jeſus* is the Head? who, under him, are the Chief Governors of his Church here below, and Guardians of all her Sacred Rights and Privileges? They beſeech, and they praiſe God together with Us, in the ſame Common Aſſemblies; and we are, therefore, doubly obliged to beſeech, and to praiſe God for them. It may be obſerved, in the

2*d* Place, That the *Roman* Emperors, for whom the Apoſtle here directs that Prayers ſhould be made, were Uſurpers and Tyrants; who acquired Dominion by invading the Liberties of a Free People, and were Arbitrary and Lawleſs in the Exerciſe of it. Their Will and Pleaſure was the ſole Standard of Juſtice; Fear was the Foundation of their Government,

vernment, and their Throne was upheld only by the Legions which ſurrounded it. SERM. VIII.

Even for ſuch Rulers the firſt Chriſtians were exhorted to Supplicate and give Thanks. How much more reaſonably and chearfully do We, who are met here this Day, now offer up that Sacrifice for a *Queen*, who wears the Crown of her Forefathers, to which She is entitled by Blood, and which was placed on her Royal Head, not only with the Free Conſent, but with the Univerſal Joy and Acclamations of her Subjects? who rules a willing People, not by the Terror of Rods and Axes, but with the indulgent Tenderneſs of a Common Parent? who deſires rather to be Beloved, than Feared by them, and takes the trueſt way towards ſecuring their Utmoſt Love, by ſhewing, in every Step of Her Gracious Conduct, that She entirely loves them? who hath no Intereſt, can have no Intereſt, ſeparate from Theirs; and upon whom Malice itſelf could never faſten a Suſpicion of her purſuing any Meaſures,

SERM. VIII. Meaſures, which aimed rather at Her Own Glory, or Advantage, than the Common Good of *England?*

The Law is as much a Rule to Her, as to the leaſt of Thoſe who obey Her; the fixt Meaſure, not only of Her governing Power, but even of Her Will to govern; and She makes no other Uſe of that Power, with which the Laws have inveſted Her, than to give Life and Force to them.

The Bleſſings of Her Mild and Merciful Government deſcend from the Throne upon Her People, *as the Small Rain cometh down into a Fleece of Wool,* without Vehemence, or Noiſe; *like the Drops of Rain, that water the Earth,* gently, and inſenſibly. She draws up the Free Offering of our Love, and Duty, only to return them back again in Showers of Royal Bounty; which make glad the Land, and produce a mighty Increaſe.

Pſ. lxxii. 6.

Surely, our Lips cannot be better employed, than in Praiſing God for ſuch mighty Benefits, as theſe, and for the

Bleſſed Hand, though which he conveys them! SERM. VIII.

Thirdly, Thoſe who governed the World, at, or near the Time of St. *Paul's* writing this Epiſtle, had no Perſonal Merits or Virtues to recommend them to the Prayers of the Faithful. *Tiberius*, *Caligula*, *Claudius*, and *Nero*, under whom the Chriſtian Faith was diſſeminated, and for all whom we may preſume, the Faithful equally made their Supplications, were not only Bad Princes, but Bad Men; infamous for their Luſt, Cruelty, and other Vices: But they were in *Authority*, and that gave them a Right to be mentioned in the Sacred Offices of the Church.

How different from Their Caſe is Ours, whoſe Eyes behold on the Throne a *Queen*, who deſerves to ſit there, as well by Her Virtue, as by Her Birth; Who, in that Public and Exalted Station, preſerves all the Innocence and Sanctity of a Private Life; Who is Superior to all the Temptations, which a great Power ſuggeſts, and which nothing but as great

Good-

SERM. VIII. Goodneſs ever overcomes; and to whom, therefore, Her Subjects ſeem to be almoſt as much obliged for the Shining Pattern of unaffected Piety, which She ſets them, as for all the other Bleſſings of Her Proſperous Reign. The Acceſſion of ſuch a Queen to a Crown is indeed a Felicity, which we may commemorate Annually, with a Devout and Sincere Joy: God grant, that we may commemorate it Often; And that we may ſtill find more and more reaſon thankfully to acknowledge it!

Finally, the Emperors of *Rome*, for whom the Primitive Chriſtians were obliged to Pray, and to give Thanks, were their avowed Enemies, and Perſecutors; who did, what they could, to hinder the Eſtabliſhment of the Church of *Chriſt*, and to ſuppreſs thoſe very Aſſemblies, wherein theſe Devotions were offered up to God in their behalf.

Whereas She, for whom we now Adore and Bleſs the good Providence of God, is, by Her Office, and by her Inclination, the Defender, and Friend, the Patroneſs

troneſs, and Nurſing-Mother of his Church eſtabliſhed amongſt us. In this Church ſhe was Baptized and Bred; and, therefore, naturally loves it; She was made early and thoroughly acquainted with its Doctrine and Government, and, conſequently, values it; She hath been a Religious Frequenter of its Worſhip, and a ſteady Adherer to its Intereſt; and was prepared, in the late times of Diſtreſs and Danger, to Suffer with it, and for it. From her, therefore, now She is advanced to a Throne, all the Members, and Miniſters of this Church may juſtly promiſe themſelves, not only the Opportunity of *leading a Quiet and Peaceable Life* (the utmoſt which the firſt Chriſtians could hope for from Their Emperors) but Further Advantages; not merely Protection, but all ſuitable Inſtances of Royal Favour and Encouragement. SERM. VIII.

Witneſs Her late Act of Princely Bounty and Compaſſion to the Poor Clergy of this Church: An Act, unequalled by any Prince, nay, by all our

SERM. VIII. Princes, ſince the Reformation; and which (I was going to ſay) may atone for Acts of a very different kind, done in ſome of their Reigns. It grieved Her Religious Heart to ſee, that Thoſe, who *wait at the Altar* ſhould not *partake with the Altar*, in ſuch a Meaſure, as is requiſite to preſerve the Reſpect due to their Characters, and to give Encouragement, and Succeſs to their Labours. She ſeemed to hear them complaining, in the pathetic Words of the Pſalmiſt; *Have Mercy upon us, O Lord, have Mercy upon us; for we are exceedingly filled with Contempt: Our Soul is exceedingly filled with the Scorning of thoſe that are at Eaſe, and with the Contempt of the Proud.* To reſcue Them, and the Religion which they taught, from [illegible] Diſadvantages, She extended her Beneficence in the moſt ample Manner, and took Care to have the good Effects of it perpetuated to Future Ages; thro' the Chearful Aſſiſtance of thoſe, who Compoſe this Illuſtrious Aſſembly, and whoſe Aſſiſtance, we are ſure, will never be wanting, to perfect

Pſ. cxxiii. 3, 4.

fect any Work, that is begun for the Honour, Advantage, and Security of the Church of *England*. Scarce any but a Royal Heart was capable of entertaining ſo large a Deſign; as none but Royal Hands were, in a Degree, equal to the Execution of it.

The Benefaction is, indeed, worthy of Her, from whom it ſprung; and carries in it Marks of a Wiſdom, as Extenſive as Her Goodneſs. For it is not confined, tho' Given, to thoſe who Miniſter in Holy Things; the Happy Fruits, and Effects of it will, through this Channel, be conveyed to all Ranks and Orders of Men among us. All will ſhare in that Munificence, which redounds to the Service of Religion, the Common Inheritance, and Bleſſing of All; and which gives Life and Weight to the Inſtructions of Thoſe, who, as meanly as they may be thought of on other Accounts, are yet *the Ambaſſadors of* Chriſt, *and Stewards of the Myſteries of God.*

An unenvied Bounty, therefore, it needs muſt be; *a Good*, which cannot

M decently be *evil ſpoken of*, even by Such (if there be any ſuch) who wiſh not well either to the Objects or the Beſtower of it.

Great and groundleſs Reproaches have, in other Reſpects, been caſt on Our Church, as if there were ſtill ſome Remains of Popery in it. Poor Vicarages are really Such; which took their Riſe from the pretended Vicar of *Chriſt*, who endowed Abbies, and Monaſteries, oftentimes, with the Spoils of Church-Livings, for the Support and Maintenance of his Spiritual Tyranny. 'Twas the great Blemiſh of our Reformation, that when Religious Houſes were ſuppreſſed, ſome Part at leaſt of their Revenue was not reſtored to its Original Uſe. But the Defects of that Time were, we Truſt, reſerved to be ſupplied by Her Majeſty; and the goodly Frame of our Conſtitution is to be perfected, as it was modelled, by the Hand of a Woman.

A Prince, leſs ſolicitous for the Good of Religion tho' intent on ſuch a Work, would yet have deferred it, till the Expenſive

penſive War, wherein we are engaged, was brought to a Cloſe. But the Compaſſion, and Godly Zeal of our Gracious Sovereign would not be checked by this Conſideration; The Love of doing Good overcame all the Difficulties, which lay in the Way towards doing it. She thought, that to conſecrate One Part of Her Revenue to ſo Pious an Uſe, would draw a Bleſſing on the Management of all the other Branches of it; That the *Cruſe of Oil* would not fail ever the ſooner, for beſtowing a Portion of it on a Prophet, or any of the Sons of the Prophets; That the Earneſt Prayers of Thoſe, whom ſhe thus relieved, would be as Serviceable to her in this War, as the Income itſelf; and that Her Charity would in the Expreſſions of the Sons of *Syrach*, *Fight for her againſt her Enemies better than a mighty Spear and a Strong Shield.* Ecclus. xxxix. 19.

SERM. VIII.

And, ſurely, the Unanimous and Early Diſpatch of the Supplies, the Preſent Height of Public Credit, and the Eagerneſs with which all her Subjects

SERM. VIII. preſs to fill Her Coffers with their Loans, are not Signs, that She hath by an Act of miſapplied Bounty hitherto loſt Ground either in the Favour of Heaven, or in the Affection, and Eſteem of Her People.

May that God, whom ſhe thus ſerves, and imitates, extend her Life and Reign beyond the Ordinary Term of either; and Crown every Year of them with new Inſtances of his Goodneſs to Her, and to theſe Kingdoms!

Now, unto the King Eternal, Immortal, Inviſible, the only Wiſe God, be Honour, and Glory, for ever and ever! Amen.

The Rule of Doing as we would be done unto;

Explained in a

SERMON

Preached before Her

MAJESTY

AT

St. JAMES's Chapel,

On *Sunday, Nov.* 5, 1704.

MATTH. vii. 12.

All things, whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.

THE Sentence I have read unto you, is very fitly placed towards the Cloſe of our Saviour's admirable

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX.

Sermon on the Mount, as being, in great Meaſure, the Epitome and Sum of what the Divine Preacher had there expreſſed more at large. Nor it is leſs fitly ordered to be recited at the Holy Table, in the moſt Solemn Part of the Service of this Day; on which we meet annually to Commemorate our Deliverance from the Attempts of thoſe bloody and mercileſs Men, who ſeem to have out-done all their Predeceſſors and Succeſſors in Wickedneſs, by a notorious Contempt of this great Evangelical Rule, and of all the Principles of common Humanity. The Practice of thoſe Conſpirators was the perfect Reverſe of this Precept; and we cannot, therefore, better be taught, or incited to deteſt the one, than by a due Illuſtration and Enforcement of the other. This I ſhall attempt, by offering to your Thoughts ſome Conſiderations, Firſt, on the Rule here laid down; *All Things, whatſoever ye would that Man ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them*: and then on the ſhort, but full *Encomium*, beſtowed upon it, that it *is the Law and the Prophets*:

phets: Which ſhall be followed by ſome *Inferences*, naturally ariſing from the Whole; and the General Reflexions advanced (tho' they may all along eaſily be underſtood to refer, yet) ſhall afterwards be particularly applied to the Subject of this Day's Solemnity. SERM. IX.

As to the Rule itſelf, we may diſtinctly conſider the juſt *Extent* and *Bounds* of it, the *Reaſon* of its *Preferableneſs* to all other Rules, in Point of *Evidence* and *Conviction*, the manifeſt *Equity* and *Exactneſs*, the peculiar *Properties* and *Advantages* of it.

All things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them! Words of great Force and Energy; and yet the moſt ſimple, plain, and perſpicuous that can be! And which therefore Commentators do (as they too often do) obſcure and perplex, by a Pretence of explaining. The only poſſible Doubt is, concerning the *Extent* of the *Matter* contained in them: For it muſt be allowed, that there are many Caſes, wherein we are by no means obliged to grant that

SERM. IX.

that to others, which we ourſelves perhaps (were we in their Circumſtances, and they in ours) might be willing enough, unreaſonably willing, to obtain from them. A Benefactor is not bound to comply with the Demands of ſuch as aſk unmerited Favours; tho' conſcious, that He himſelf might be apt to make as extravagant Requeſts, were it his Turn to be the Object of another Man's Beneficence. A Magiſtrate is not at Liberty, much leſs under any Obligation, to turn the Edge of Juſtice from an importunate Offender; becauſe, if He himſelf were the Criminal, he ſhould certainly, and equally deſire to eſcape unpuniſhed. The Rule, therefore, which makes what we deſire of other Men, the Meaſure of our dealing towards them, is to be underſtood not of vicious and exceſſive Deſires, but of ſuch only as are fit and reaſonable; ſuch Requeſts as we can, in our calmeſt Thoughts, juſtify to ourſelves; ſuch as, we are ſure, may be made without Indecency, and cannot be refuſed without Inhumanity. And, under

der this neceſſary Limitation, the Precept of the Text may be thus underſtood: "Put thyſelf into ſuch a Man's Con-"dition, and conſider, what Treatment, "what Favours, in That Caſe, thou "mighteſt fairly and Juſtly expect *from* "Him; and be Thou fair to deal *with* "Him, according to thoſe thy juſt and "regular Expectations." And this I take to be the true Explication of that other equivalent Precept, given in the *Goſpel*, to *Love our Neighbours as ourſelves*; which we may then, in the moſt proper and ſtrict Senſe of the Words, be ſaid to do, when we, firſt, place ourſelves in our Neighbour's ſtead, and, then, learn to love him; by conſidering, What Degree of Love and Good-will, of Forbearance and Forgiveneſs, we might, under that Change of Circumſtances, challenge from him. SERM. IX.

It may be thought, that the Rule, thus tempered and qualified, will not be of any ſpecial Uſe, or Moment to us, in the Direction of our Practice; inaſmuch as the Lines of Duty do not ſeem to be more

SERM. IX. more clearly marked out, by this Method of Compariſon, than they would have been, by a direct Injunction to us, ſo to deal with others, as right Reaſon and our Conſciences inform us, that we ought to deal with them. For, after all, when we have made Another Man's Caſe Our's, we are ſtill left to judge, what, under ſuch a Change of Circumſtances, we might, in Equity and Reaſon, expect from him, before we can determine, after what manner we are to behave ourſelves towards him: And, therefore, which way ſoever we take the Meaſure of our Duty; to the Bar of Equity and Reaſon we muſt, it ſeems, in order to the fixing it, always finally appeal.

'Tis true, we muſt---But the Maxim of the Text is That, which, of all others, doth moſt effectually aſſiſt us towards making a free Uſe of our Reaſon, and forming right Judgment of Things, on ſuch Occaſions: For, by the Means of it, we are able to conſider our Duty without Prejudice, and to ſtate the Bounds of it impartially and fairly. When we determine

mine amiſs concerning the Obligations incumbent upon us in Reſpect of other Men; 'tis by Reaſon of that ſtrong Weight of Self-Love, which, like a Biaſs, inclines, and ſecretly ſways our Minds towards that Side on which our Own Intereſt lies. To ſet this Error right, we ſuppoſe ourſelves to be the Men, who are to receive this Treatment *from* Others, which we are about to practiſe *toward* Them; and, then, the ſame Selfiſh Principle makes that appear very hard and unreaſonable, which before it inclined us to approve; and thus our warped and perverted Judgment, by being bent as much towards the Oppoſite Side, recovers its Straitneſs. The Rule of the Text, therefore, is at the Bottom, a wiſe Art of rebating one Degree of our Partiality by another; it enables us to take two ſeveral Views of our Duty, to eye it in different Situations, and under different Lights; and by that means, more diſtinctly and thoroughly to diſcern it. And, in this Senſe *Meaſuring ourſelves by* 2 Cor. x. 12.

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. *by ourſelves, and comparing ourſelves with ourſelves*, we take the ſureſt way to be both *Juſt* and *Wiſe*.

There's nothing, we know, that gives a Man ſo true and lively a Senſe of the Sufferings of Others, or reſtrains him ſo powerfully from Doing Unrighteous and Oppreſſive things, as his having ſmarted, formerly, himſelf, under the Experience of them. Now, the ſuppoſing another Man's ill Uſage to be Ours, is, the giving ourſelves a preſent Senſe, as it were, a kind of feigned Experience of it; which doth, for the time, ſerve all the Purpoſes of a True one.

Upon theſe Accounts it is, that the Precept of the Text carries greater *Evidence*, and a fuller Degree of *Conviction* in it, than any other Rule of Morality; its apparent *Equity* and *Reaſonableneſs*, is what we are next to conſider. And this is ſo plain a Point, as not to want, or indeed be capable of, a ſolemn Proof: For the Precept manifeſtly aims at That, which is the known Foundation of Equity and Juſtice, in all Matters of Intercourſe

tercourſe between Man and Man; the reducing things to one common Standard, by the Application of which they are all to be examined, and tried. *Thou ſhalt not have in thy Bag, or in thine Houſe* (ſaid the *Levitical* Law) *divers Weights, and divers Meaſures; a Great and a Small,* [i. e. one, wherewith to Buy; and another, wherewith to Sell:] *But thou ſhalt have a perfect and juſt Weight, a perfect and juſt Meaſure ſhalt thou have.* What is ſaid here of ordinary Traffic and Dealing, holds as true of the General Commerce of Human Life, and that Exchange of Good Offices by which Society is upheld: There muſt be *a perfect Weight*, and *a juſt Meaſure*, by which all Men are mutually obliged to regulate their Conduct, in acting and ſuffering, in commanding and obeying, in giving and receiving; and this can be no other than the Equal and Righteous Rule of the Text, the *Doing* in all Caſes, and to all Perſons, *even as we would be done unto.* There is no one ſo abſurd and unreaſonable, as not to ſee and acknow-

SERM. IX.

Deut. xxv. 13, 14.

SERM. IX. acknowledge the Abſolute Equity of this Command, in the Theory, however he may ſwerve and decline from it in his Practice; and to agree upon it as that Golden Mean, which, if univerſally obſerved, would make the World univerſally Happy; every Man a Benefactor, a Good Angel, a Deity, as it were, to his Fellow-Creatures; and Earth, the very Image of Heaven! I need, I can ſay no more, concerning the Reaſonableneſs of this Precept: However, it may help to excite and quicken your Deſires and Hopes of obeying it, if I proceed, as I propoſed, to point out ſome diſtinguiſhing *Properties* and *Advantages* of it.

The Firſt of which is, that it is alike eaſy and obvious to all Underſtandings, to the meaneſt, and moſt ignorant Men, as well as to thoſe of the greateſt Parts and Improvements. God is, on this, as well as on other Accounts, no Reſpecter of Perſons: having made that which is moſt neceſſary, moſt common, and, conſequently, ſuited this Principle,

which all Men have equal Occaſion to uſe, equally to the Apprehenſions of all Men. They, therefore, who are incapable of long Trains in Deductions of Reaſon, and of adapting the ſeveral Rules of Morality to the various Circumſtances of Action, are yet able (as able as the acuteſt Philoſophers, or Caſuiſts) to look into their Own Hearts, to aſk themſelves this plain Queſtion, and to return a clear Anſwer to it: "Would I myſelf be content, that others ſhould thus deal with me? Why then ſhould I ſo deal with any Man?" SERM. IX.

Human Laws are often ſo numerous, as to eſcape our Memories; ſo darkly ſometimes, and inconſiſtently worded, as to puzzle our Underſtandings; and their original Obſcurity is not ſeldom improved by the nice Diſtinction and ſubtle Reaſonings of thoſe who profeſs to clear them: So that under theſe ſeveral Diſadvantages, they loſe much of their Force and Influence; and, in ſome Caſes, raiſe more Diſputes than, perhaps, they determine. But here is a Law, attended

SERM. IX.

with none of theſe Inconveniencies; the groſſeſt Minds can ſcarce miſapprehend it; the weakeſt Memories are capable of retaining it: No perplexing Comment can eaſily cloud it; the Authority of no Man's Gloſs upon Earth can (if we are but ſincere) ſway us to make a wrong Conſtruction of it. What is ſaid of all the Goſpel-Precepts by the Evangelical Prophet, is more eminently true of this; *It is an High-Way; and the Way-fairing Man, tho' a Fool, ſhall not err therein.* Iſ. xxxv. 8.

'Tis not enough that a Rule, which is to be of General Uſe, is ſuited to all Capacities; ſo that, where-ever it is repreſented to the Mind, it is preſently agreed to: It muſt alſo be apt to offer itſelf to our Thoughts, and lie ready for preſent Uſe, upon all Exigencies, and Occaſions. And ſuch, remarkably ſuch, is that which our Lord here recommends to us. We can ſcarce be ſo far ſurpriſed by any immediate Neceſſity of Acting, as not to have Time for a ſhort Recourſe to it, Room for a ſudden Glance, as it were upon it, in our Minds; where it reſts,

and

and ſparkles always, like the *Urim* and *Thummim*, on the Breaſt of *Aaron*. There is no Occaſion for us to go in Search of it to the Oracles of Law, dead, or living; to the *Code*, or *Pandects*; to the Volumes of Divines, or Moraliſts: *Quod petis, hic eſt:* We need look no further than ourſelves for it: For (to uſe the appoſite Expreſſions of *Moſes*) *This Commandment, which I command thee this Day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in Heaven, that thou ſhould ſay, Who ſhall go up for us to Heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the Sea, that thou ſhouldſt ſay, Who ſhall go over the Sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth, and in thy Heart, that thou may'ſt do it.* SERM. IX. Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13, 14.

It is moreover, a Precept, particularly fitted for Practice; as it involves in the very Notion of it a Motive, ſtirring us up to Do what it Enjoins. Other

SERM. IX.

Moral Maxims propoſe naked Truths to the *Underſtanding*, which operate often but faintly and ſlowly on the *Will* and *Paſſions*, the two Active Principles of the Mind of Man; But it is the peculiar Character of This, that it addreſſeth itſelf equally to all theſe Powers; imparts both Light and Heat to us; and, at the ſame time that it informs us certainly and clearly, what we are to do, excites us alſo, in the moſt tender and moving manner, to the Performance of it. We can ſee our Neighbour's Misfortune, without a ſenſible Degree of Concern; which yet we cannot forbear expreſſing, when we have once made His Condition our Own, and determined the Meaſure of our Obligation towards him, by what We ourſelves ſhould, in ſuch a Caſe, Expect from Him: Our Duty grows immediately our Intereſt, and Pleaſure, by the means of this powerful Principle; the Seat of which is, in truth, not more in the Brain, than in the Heart of Man: It appeals to our very Senſes; and exerts its ſecret Force in ſo prevailing a way,

way, that it is even Felt, as well as Understood by us. SERM. IX.

The Laſt Recommendation of this Rule I ſhall mention, is its Vaſt and Comprehenſive Influence: For it extends to all Ranks and Conditions of Men, and to all kinds of Action and Intercourſe between them; to matter of Charity, Generoſity, and Civility, as well as Juſtice; to Negative, no leſs than Poſitive Duties. The Ruler and the Ruled, are alike ſubject to it; Public Communities can no more exempt themſelves from its Obligation, than Private Perſons; *All Perſons muſt fall down before it, all Nations muſt do it Service.* And, with reſpect to this Extent of it, it is, that our Bleſſed Lord pronounces it, in the Text, to be *the Law and the Prophets.* His Meaning is, that, Whatever Rules of the *Second Table* are delivered in the Law of *Moſes*, or in the larger Comments and Explanations of that Law, made by the Other Writers of the Old Teſtament, [here, and elſewhere, ſtyled *the Prophets*] they are all virtually compriſed in this Pſ. lxxii. 11.

SERM. IX. one ſhort ſignificant Saying, *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo unto them:* From this, as from their Common Source, they were all Originally derived; and into this they may be all ultimately reſolved; *For all the Law is fulfilled in One Word,* ſaith St. *Paul, even in This, Thou ſhalt Love thy Neighbour as thy Self:* And I have ſhewed You, that this Word is the ſame in Senſe, with the Word or Precept of the Text; though it be not delivered in ſo clear, ſo expreſſive, and ſo convincing a Manner. And this Word, therefore, the ſame Apoſtle calls elſewhere, *The End of the Commandment*; and St. *James, The Royal Law:* That (they both mean) in which all the Lines of Duty, relating to our Neighbour, centre; and under which, as under one common Head and Principle, they may be reduced and ranged.

Gal. v. 14.

1 Tim. i. 5.

James ii. 8.

Various are the Uſes, into which this important Truth, thus handled, is capable of being improved.

For

For from hence I might, in the firſt place, take Occaſion to conſider, Whether, and how far, the Precept here given to be the *Whole*, not only of the *Law*, and the *Prophets*, but of the *Goſpel* alſo; and what Evangelical Duties * there are, which ſeem, as the Schools ſpeak, *to tranſcend it*; to be (as Myſteries are, in reſpect of Reaſon) not indeed *againſt* this great Principle, but *above*, and *beyond* it; and ſuch, as we cannot thoroughly account for, without taking the Conſideration of another World into our Schemes and Reaſonings. SERM. IX.

I might, in the next Place, proceed to ſhew, how large a Share Moral Truths have, even in the Body of revealed Doctrines; ſince the Precept of the Text, which comprehends only the Duty we

* Grotius in Acts xv. 20. *Si quis dicere velit, hâc verborum ſummâ comprehendi omnia Evangelii præcepta, fallitur.* Cùm præceptum de Uno Deo colendo per Chriſtum, de abnegatione Sui, de ſubeundâ Cruce, non ſint intra hunc ambitum: *Alia etiam non niſi obſcurè admodum huc referri poſſunt.*

SERM. IX. owe to our Neighbours, is ſaid to be *the Law and the Prophets.* An Expreſſion, not indeed to be taken rigorouſly, and in the Letter! But which may however be underſtood to imply, that as a great Part of Holy Writ is employed in directly preſſing the Duties abridged in this Precept, ſo the reſt of it plainly points and refers to them: Even the higheſt Myſteries of Faith were not made known to us, without ſome Regard to our Improvement in Practical Virtues; and the Knowledge of thoſe, unleſs it tends to quicken our Obedience to theſe, will be of no manner of Service to us, will neither better us in this World, nor ſave us in the next.

From the Aſſertion, in the Cloſe of the Text, it may be yet further, and more clearly inferred, That there is a Chain of Moral Reaſoning, by which the ſeveral Duties of the Second Table are connected together, and have an orderly Dependance on One Common Principle, out of which they were drawn. That Virtue, therefore, is not the blind Homage

mage of our Nature, arbitrarily exacted from us; but a Duty fitted and proportioned to the Light of our Faculties, and every way our *Reaſonable Service:* In a word, that Morality is a true and proper Science, and all the Parts of it capable of ſtrict Demonſtration. SERM. IX. Rom. xii. 1.

An Obſervation, of manifold and excellent Uſe! For it teaches us to reject the Pretences of thoſe vain and fanciful Enthuſiaſts, who have framed a Rule of Duty to themſelves, as contrary to the common Senſe and Reaſon, as it is to the current Language of Mankind; ſo Refined and Sublime, as to be utterly unintelligible and impracticable: It is not to be learned, or confuted, in the Method of other Doctrines; it is to be made out only by the Force of ſome Unaccountable Impreſſions; by a light that ſhines inward, and which cannot be communicated, or diſcovered. But *We have not ſo learned Chriſt:* On the contrary, we are aſſured, that we do our Lord and Maſter good Service, ſuch as he will own, and reward, when we apply ourſelves to Eph. iv. 20.

eſtabliſh

SERM. IX. eſtabliſh the Truths of our Religion upon Principles of Reaſon, and to argue Men into their Duty by appealing to Natural Light, to the Certainty of firſt Principles, and to the Evident Deductions which may from thence be made by the ſure Rules of Diſcourſe; and that we are not to regard the Cenſures of thoſe, who, on this Account, ſhall ſtyle us mere Moral Teachers, and Carnal Reaſoners; but will not allow us to ſpeak by the Spirit, or to be at all acquainted with the Life and Power of Godlineſs. As if Religion were a thing deſigned not to be underſtood, or made out! but loſt ſome of her native Majeſty and Force, when once we came to reaſon upon it!

Nor would it be an Unprofitable Reflexion, to obſerve from hence the great Benignity and Goodneſs of God, who hath made even our *Own Will*, and our *Self-Love*, a complete Law of Action, and Meaſure of our Duty to us. *All things whatſoever ye would* [i. e. whatſoever Ye are willing] *that Men ſhould do unto You,*

You, do Ye even ſo to them! Surely a very Eaſy Yoke, and Light Burthen! We may be averſe, perhaps, from ſubmitting to the Divine Will, or to the Will of any of our Fellow Creatures, exerciſing Authority over us: but can we be otherwiſe than contented, and pleaſed, in ſubmitting to our *Own* Will, whatever it is? And yet a Submiſſion to *That* (when regulated by proper Circumſtances, and Views) is all that is required of us. Merciful Saviour, thou ſaidſt once indeed to thy Father, as thou wert Man, *Not my Will, but thine be done!* But who could expect that thou ſhouldſt have ſaid the ſame thing to Us alſo, as thou art God! However, thus in Effect, thou haſt ſaid, in the Precept now before us. Teach us, O Lord, by the means of this Precept, ſo duly to regulate our Wills, that we may ſafely follow them! Make Thy Will, Ours; that ſo, in doing our Own Will, we may be ſure to fulfil Thine alſo!

SERM. IX.

Luke xxii 42.

We ſee from hence, how far the Goſpel is from ſuppreſſing, or checking the

Principle

SERM. IX.

Principle of *Self-Love* in us, which it makes the Ground and Rule of all that Love we owe to Others; and which, therefore we may innocently, nay, uſefully carry to what Degree, what Height we pleaſe, if we do but take Care that the Love of our Neighbour keeps pace with that of our Self, and is governed by it. Very Extravagant, therefore, and Unwarrantable are thoſe Flights of Devotion, which ſome Enthuſiaſtical Saints of the Church of *Rome* have indulged themſelves in; who make it neceſſary for every Chriſtian, in order to his arriving at Perfection, to diveſt himſelf of all manner of Regard for himſelf; nay to deſpiſe, to hate, and to abhor himſelf, in the utmoſt Propriety of the Expreſſion. Certainly, if what theſe Myſtical Divines ſay, be true, impoſſible it is for a perfect Man to love his Neighbour at all: Since he is not allowed, by their Scheme, to love himſelf; and yet is bound to love his Neighbour, as he loves himſelf (or, which is all one, to do as he would be done unto) by our Lord's expreſs Determination.

Several

Several other weighty Truths there are, which this fruitful Theme would ſuggeſt; and moſt of thoſe, I have mentioned, might deſerve to be handled more largely. But I muſt contract my Thoughts on this Head, that I may have room to inſiſt on one Plain, Uſeful Inference, wherein I am to apply the Doctrine hitherto delivered. It is this—If the Precept of the Text be ſo Fundamental and Neceſſary, ſo Obvious and Eaſy, ſo Sure and Safe, ſo Full and Comprehenſive a Rule of Life and Manners; how inexcuſable, upon all theſe Accounts, muſt thoſe Perſons be, who, throughout the whole Courſe of their Actions, ſhew, that they do not regard it? I ſhall, firſt, expoſtulate the Caſe with ſuch as offend againſt this Precept at large; and, then, conſider that particular and flagrant Inſtance of the Breach of it which This Day affords us. SERM. IX.

Are we, then, any of us, profeſſed Contemners of Revealed Religion? I hope, we are not; but thoſe who are, would ſtill be thought to have a mighty Reve-

SERM. IX. Reverence for Reaſon (ſince by the Help of Reaſon it is, that they endeavour to throw off Revelation;) and while they have, this its Eldeſt and moſt Unqueſtioned Law ſhould, methinks, be very Sacred to them. What! Shall the great Maſters of Exact Thinking, and Idolizers of Reaſon live in a perpetual Contradiction to the firſt Principle of it! Will They, who have ſo Little Light to guide themſelves by (that of Nature alone) neglect to make uſe even of that Little, which they have? And yet, perhaps, there is no ſort of Men whatever, that offend ſo remarkably againſt the Evident Righteouſneſs of this Rule, as Thoſe, who pretend moſt to magnify the Principle from whence it flows: There are none who purſue their Pleaſure ſo keenly, and ſooth all their Paſſions ſo carefully; are every way ſo Selfiſh and ſo directly ſet in Oppoſition to this Generous and Equal Maxim; as the Men, who will tell you, They adore plain Common Senſe, but cannot digeſt a Myſtery. From whence it is manifeſt, that their Diſeſteem of Faith proceeds

not from any juſt Eſteem they have of Reaſon, or any Regard they bear to its Laws; but merely from a Spirit of Libertiniſm, and a Deſire of coming under as few Obligations as poſſible. 'Tis not a Freedom of Thinking, which they aim at; but a Freedom of Living, and of Doing what they pleaſe, without the Controul of Law, or Fear of Puniſhment. And, in order to this, one good Step is, to ſhake off Revealed Religion; and ſuch an One, as is uſually followed by another, the parting with All Religion, even That which Nature itſelf preſcribes. To theſe Reaſoners therefore we ſay, that the Rule of *doing as they would be done by*, is not (what they are ſo jealous of) any Impoſition upon their Underſtandings, any puzzling myſterious Doctrine; it is all Pure Light, and Evidence, *and it is no Darkneſs at all.* Why then do they not Submit to it? Why do they, of all Men Living, do as they would not be done by? Oppreſs and trample upon their Inferiors, Revile their Betters, and Supplant their Equals? Carry on their Unlawful Deſires,

SERM. IX.

1 John i. 5.

SERM. IX. fires, without Stint, or Bounds, to the Injuring the Property of thoſe who are too weak to contend with them, to the defaming their Neighbour's Reputation, or defiling his Bed? Why, in a word, do they make themſelves the only Centre of all their Actions, Wiſhes, and Deſigns; and regard nothing that is without them any farther than it may be uſeful to their Purpoſes and Enjoyments? Let us ſee this lofty Race of Men in good earneſt ſtoop to this plain Dictate of Reaſon; and then we ſhall be inclined to think them ſincere, when they pretend to hearken to the Voice of Reaſon, and to that only; and may have room to hope, that the good God, who ſees them honeſtly practiſing all thoſe Virtues which flow from this Rule, will add what is behind, and in his own time graft Grace upon Nature.

But do we (as every one, I truſt, doth, who hears me this Day) profeſs ourſelves to be the Diſciples of *Chriſt?* And, can we think ourſelves really to Be, what we profeſs, while we openly and avowedly

break this great Precept of *Chriſt*; the main Hinge, upon which the Morality of his Goſpel turns? We may boaſt, if we pleaſe, of our having all Knowledge, and all Faith, and of our Underſtanding all Myſteries: But if we do not govern our Lives by this Truth, which is evident by Nature, 'twill be to no Purpoſe, that we firmly aſſent to thoſe Truths which are revealed to us by Grace. We deny Chriſtianity, indeed, if we reject Theſe: But if we live in Contradiction to That, we renounce the Principles of Human Nature itſelf; without ſuppoſing which, there can be no Chriſtianity. Let us Profeſs, and Believe what we will; unleſs We Do alſo as We would be done unto, all Our Faith, and Our Religion is vain. Nor is it Vain only, and Unprofitable, in Reſpect of our Selves; it is alſo of pernicious Conſequence to Others, who from ſuch Inſtances as theſe, will take Occaſion to diſparage the Influence and Efficacy of Revealed Religion, and to harden themſelves in their Infidelity. The Ridiculers of Divine Faith, the De-

SERM. IX.

SERM. IX. ſpiſers of Myſteries, never exerciſe their Scornful Talent with greater Pleaſure, or Succeſs, than when they attack the Principles of Chriſtianity, by comparing them with the Practice of Chriſtians; eſpecially in this Capital Article of all Schemes of Religion, *the doing to Men as we would be done unto*; and can point out our manifeſt and ſcandalous Violations of this plain Rule of Reaſon, while we pretend to embrace all the Sublime Doctrines, and to inherit all the glorious Advantages of a Divine Revelation. The Heathen Emperor, *Severus, ſhall riſe up in the Judgment with* ſuch a *Generation* of Chriſtians, *and Condemn* them: For, He, by the Light of Nature, was taught highly to reverence this Precept; it was written on the Walls of his Palace, and in the Banners of his Army; it was engraved in his very Heart, and tranſcribed from thence into his Practice. Would to God, that many of thoſe pretended Vicars of *Chriſt*, who have ſince erected their Thrones in the Chief Seat of this Prince's Empire, had alike ſucceeded him

Matt. xii. 41.

in

in an awful and Conſcientious Regard for this Excellent Maxim, and had been, in that Reſpect, as good Chriſtians (or rather, as good Heathens) as He was! They would not then, have become the Authors and Fomenters of all that Diſcord and Confuſion, all thoſe Wars and Maſſacres, thoſe Conſpiracies and Rebellions, with which they have, for many Centuries paſt, ſhook the Thrones of Princes, and diſturbed the Quiet of this Weſtern World. Nor would they, in order to cover and palliate theſe Wicked Attempts, have openly encouraged the Caſuiſts of their Communion to publiſh ſuch looſe and ſcandalous Syſtems of Morals, as, inſtead of being Comments on this Rule, are a perfect Contradiction to it, and are calculated, not to bring up Mens Obedience to the Terms of the Goſpel, but to bring down the Goſpel-Terms, as near as can be, to the Infirmities and Failings, nay, to the Corruptions and Vices, of Human Nature.

SERM. IX.

The Time would fail me, ſhould I attempt to mention the moſt remarkable

SERM. IX. Inſtances, which would readily offer themſelves, in either kind: That One Inſtance, which the Treaſon of this Day affords us, doth, in Effect, comprehend the Wickedneſs of all the reſt; and is, when briefly inſiſted on, ſufficient to raiſe in us a due Abhorrence of thoſe Ungodly Principles and Practices, by which the Papacy hath enlarged its Intereſt, and eſtabliſhed its Spiritual Tyranny over the Underſtandings and Conſciences of Men.

The Treaſon of This Day was a Contrivance, Wicked and Cruel beyond Example, and beyond Expreſſion; Such, as the Ears of any Honeſt Heathen when they hear it related, muſt tingle at; Such as, if perpetrated in the Infancy of Chriſtianity, would have gone near to have arreſted the Courſe of it, in Countries as yet unconverted, and to have rendered even the Miracles, done for its Confirmation, inſignificant and vain; In a word, Such, as nothing but the Malice of One of that Order, which hath been, even ſince its firſt Erection, the Scourge and Peſt of Mankind, could have pro-

projected; nor Any, but ſome of its Bi- SERM.
gotted and Furious Votaries, durſt to IX.
have Executed. Bleſſed *Jeſu!* That ever
Men, more particularly calling themſelves by Thy Name, and pretending more immediately to devote themſelves to Thy Service, ſhould ſo far forget the Law of Humanity and Kindneſs, which was viſible in every Part of thy Behaviour, while thou waſt on Earth, and is ſtill regible in every Page of thy Goſpel! That they ſhould be miſled, by the perverſe Comments of their Own Caſuiſts upon this Law, ſo far, as to believe, that a Maſſacring Spirit was reconcileable to the Spirit of Chriſtianity, and that the genuine Principles of it could lead, or permit Men to overturn States and Kingdoms! Such Ill Effects may ſpring from the beſt of Cauſes, Religion, when perverted and abuſed! Such horrid Impieties may Men arrive at, when they have once fixed this Perſuaſion firmly in themſelves, That, how vile ſoever the Attempts are, in which they engage, yet, if the End be Good, it juſtifies and ſanctifies

SERM. IX. the Means; and that the plaineſt Rules and Duties of the Goſpel do not bind Thoſe who are, as they imagine, propagating the Intereſts of it.

Bleſſed be thy Name, O Lord, who didſt, as on this Day, after a marvellous manner, diſappoint their bloody Deſigns, when they were even ready to take place, and didſt ſuffer our Princes, our Prelates, our Nobles, all the Chief Ornaments, and Supports of thy pure undefiled Religion eſtabliſhed among us, to *eſcape* out of their Hands *even as a Bird from the Snare of the Fowler!* Surely, *the Wrath of Man* hath praiſed, and *ſhall praiſe thee: --- The Remainder of Wrath ſhalt thou reſtrain.*

Pſ. cxxiv. 7.

lxxvi. 10.

I need not endeavour to raiſe your Thankfulneſs for the Mercies of this Day, by ſhewing, that, as diſtant as they are, they ſtill belong to us. Some Bleſſings wax not old, or decay; but, like the Rod of the Tribe of *Levi*, laid up in the Tabernacle, though ſeemingly ſapleſs and dead, do yet ſhoot, and ſend forth their Bloſſoms. And ſuch is That we

now

now Commemorate; even Now we taſte the ſweet Fruits and Effects of it: For to this Day's Deliverance (this Day's Double Deliverance) it is owing, that we are freed from the Fears of Papal Superſtition and Bondage; that we enjoy all our Religious, and Civil Liberties, all that is dear and valuable to us, in reſpect of This World, or Another; and even that we ſee HER on the Throne (the Throne of her Royal Anceſtors, deſigned this Day for Slaughter) Who, by ſitting there, protects and ſecures us in theſe Enjoyments. SERM. IX.

Great and manifold have the Inſtances been of God's Interpoſition to reſcue this Church and Nation, when they moſt needed it; nor is his *Hand yet ſhortened that it cannot ſave:* For, behold, what mighty things he hath lately wrought for us! In how ſeaſonable and ſurpriſing a manner he hath bleſſed the Arms, which have been taken up in Defence of his True Religion, the Liberties of *Europe*, and the Rights of Mankind, againſt the Common Invader and Deſtroyer of all Iſa. lix. 1.

SERM. IX. of them? Whoſe haughty Heart he hath at laſt humbled, and ſtained his boaſted Glory; the Vain Idol, which that proud Monarch ſet up, and commanded all Nations to fall down and worſhip! The Succeſs, which God hath given us, is great in itſelf; but much greater in the Conſequences which it ſeems to promiſe. For who knows but that, by this ſingle Blow, the Fate of that Kingdom may at length be decided? of that Inſolent Kingdom, who thought ſhe had *put her Neſt in the Rock*, whither none could Approach to hurt her? And ſeemed (in the Expreſſions of the Prophet) *to ſay in her Heart, I ſhall be a Lady for ever; I am, and none elſe beſide me?* Who knows, but that the mighty Hunter of Men may, from this Moment, be obliged to forego his Chace? May find it come to his turn to fly, and be purſued every where? and have the Preys, which he hath violently ſeized, raviſhed again out of his Hand! Who knows but that the ſeveral Victories which he hath meanly ſtolen, or purchaſed, may now, after a more

Numb. xxiv. 21.

Iſa. xlvii. 7, 8.

fair

fair and generous manner, be regained? and all the Laurels, he unjuſtly wears, be torn from his Temples, and placed on the Head of *Another*, who better deſerves them? Certain it is, that God hath already begun to do theſe great Things for us; which, unleſs we are wanting to ourſelves, he will as certainly finiſh. Already, ſince this Blow was given, we have ſeen the happy Effects of it, in the Public Confeſſion of an Exhauſted Exchequer, and a Languiſhing Credit: Evils, which, God be thanked, are neither felt, nor feared by us at home, under the preſent Vigilant and Wiſe Adminiſtration.

SERM. IX.

Do thou, *O God*, we beſeech Thee, go on to *ſtrengthen the Thing which thou haſt wrought for us! Shew thy Servants thy Work, and their Children thy Glory! And the Glorious Majeſty of the Lord our God be upon us! Proſper thou the Work of our Hands upon us! O, proſper thou our Handy-work.* Pſ. lxvii. 28. xc. 16, 17.

Of

Of Religious Retirement.

A

SERMON

Preached before the

QUEEN

AT

St. JAMES's Chapel,

On *Friday, March* 23, 1704.

MATTH. xiv. 23.

When he had ſent the Multitude away, he went up into a Mountain, apart, to Pray.

IT hath been diſputed, which is a State of greater Perfection, the Social, or the Solitary; whereas, in Truth, neither of theſe Eſtates is complete without

SERM. X.

SERM. X.

out the Other; as the Example of our Bleſſed Lord (the Unerring Teſt and Meaſure of Perfection) informs us. His Life (which ought to be the Pattern of Ours) was a Mixture of Contemplation and Action, of Auſterity and Freedom; We find him often, where the greateſt Concourſe was, in the Market-Places, in the Synagogues, and at Feſtival Entertainments; and we find him alſo retiring from the Crowd into a Deſert, or a Garden, and there employing himſelf in all kinds of Religious Exerciſe, and Intercourſe with God, in Faſting, Meditation, and Prayer. In Imitation of his Spotleſs Example, we *may*, doubtleſs, lead Public Lives, Innocently, and Uſefully; Converſing with Men, and doing good to them; mutually ſowing, and reaping the ſeveral Comforts and Advantages of Human Society. But becauſe the Pleaſures of Converſation, when too freely taſted, are Intoxicating, and Dangerous; becauſe the Temptations we there meet with are many and mighty; and even where the *Spirit is Willing* to

reſiſt, yet the *Fleſh* is often *Weak*; we ought, therefore, to leſſen the too great Complacence we are apt to have in ſuch Satisfactions, by fit Intermiſſions of them; to ſtrengthen ourſelves for ſuch Public Encounters, by our Religious Privacies; to retire from the World ſometimes, and Converſe with God, and our own Conſciencies; examining the State, and fortifying the Powers of our Souls, in Secrecy and Silence: We muſt do, as our Lord did, *Send the Multitude away, and go up into the Mountain, apart, to Pray.* SERM. X.

I ſhall, from theſe Words, take Occaſion to diſcourſe to you concerning the Great (but much Neglected) Duty of *Religious Retreats and Recollection.* I ſhall, firſt, briefly ſhew you, under what Limitations I would be underſtood to recommend the Duty; and, then, What the Advantages are, which ariſe from a devout and diſcreet Performance of it.

I mean not to preſs upon you that ſort of Retirement, which is ſo much eſteemed and practiſed in the Church of *Rome*;

SERM. X. *Rome*; where all Perfection is reckoned to conſiſt in Solitude, and no Man is allowed capable of arriving at the Height of Virtue, who doth not ſtrip himſelf of all the Conveniencies of Life, and renounce all manner of Acquaintance with the World, and the Things of it: I ſee not, wherein this State of Life claims the Pre-eminence over all others; how it is founded in Nature, and Reaſon; what particular Example, Precept, or Direction there is in the Goſpel, inviting us to it. *John* the Baptiſt is, indeed, there repreſented, as ſequeſting himſelf from Human Converſe, and ſpending his time *in the Wilderneſs*: but as he is ſaid to have come *in the Spirit and Power of Elias* (a Spirit far different from the *Spirit* of the Goſpel) and did, therefore, profeſſedly imitate that Prophet, in his ſevere manner of Life, and Look, and Diet, and Garb, and Behaviour, and Doctrine; ſo his Example belonged, rather to the *Moſaic State*, under which he lived and taught, than to the *Chriſtian Diſpenſation*, which began, where his Preach-

Luke i. 17. ix. 55.

Preaching ended. Nor did even the Baptiſt himſelf propoſe his own Practice, as a Pattern to his Followers: on the contrary, when *the People*, *the Publicans*, and *the Soldiers* enquired of him, *what they ſhould do to flee from the Wrath to come*, he did not exhort them to go out of the World into the Wilderneſs; but gave them ſuch Directions only as related to a faithful Diſcharge of their Duty in their ſeveral Stations and Callings: And when afterwards our Saviour began to enter on his Miniſtry, and to appear *as* our Saviour, by publiſhing the Goſpel of his Kingdom, we find nothing either in his Actions, or his Doctrine, to countenance that Recluſe and Solitary State, which ſome ſince, who would be thought beſt to have imitated his Example, and obeyed his Precepts, have ſo zealouſly eſpouſed and practiſed. His Divine Diſcourſes were chiefly ſpent in preſſing Men to exerciſe thoſe Graces which adorn the Sociable State: even his firſt Sermon on the Mount to the Multitude did, in the Entrance of it, recommend

SERM. X.

SERM. X. and enjoin a Public, Conſpicuous, and Exemplary Virtue; and (with ſome Alluſion, perhaps, to that Eminence on which he ſat, and the Company which ſurrounded him) he then likened his Diſciples to *a City ſet on an Hill, that cannot be hid*; he commanded them to *put their Light in a Candleſtick, not under a Buſhel*; *and ſo* to make *it ſhine before Men, that They ſeeing their good Works, might glorify their Father which is in Heaven.*

Matt. v. 14. Ib. v. 15. Ib. v. 16.

Far be it from me, however, to condemn all thoſe Good and Holy Perſons, who have betaken themſelves to this Solitary and Auſtere Courſe of Living. Doubtleſs, many of them were acted by a ſincere, but miſguided, Principle of Piety; the Fruits of which, tho' mixed with a great Alloy of Superſtition, did yet, in divers Reſpects, redound to the Credit of Religion, and the Good of Mankind. But ſuppoſing theſe to be Real, yet they were, I ſay, Uncommanded Inſtances of Virtue; not poſſible, or, if poſſible, not fit to be practiſed by the far

far greater Part of Chriſtians. The Retreat, therefore, which I am ſpeaking of, is not that of *Monks* and *Hermits*, but of Men living in the World, and going out of it for a Time, in order to return into it; it is a Temporary, not a Total Retreat: ſuch as we may leave off, or reſume, at Pleaſure, according as we have Need of it, or an Opportunity for it; ſuch as is conſiſtent with all the Buſineſs, and even with the Innocent Pleaſures of Life; and is ſo far from interfering with the Duties of our Public Offices and Stations, that it diſpoſes and enables us for the better Diſcharge of them. 'Tis this Sort of Retreat which may properly be made the matter of general Exhortation from the Pulpit, becauſe it is really matter of general Obligation to every good and ſincere Chriſtian. SERM. X.

No Man is, or ought to be ſo deeply immerſed in the Affairs of this World, as not to be able to retire from them now and then into his Cloſet, there to mind the Concerns of another. Every

SERM. X.

Day of his Life, Early, or Late, ſome Moments he may and muſt find to beſtow this Way; the Lord's Day particularly is a great Opportunity of this kind, which can never wholly be neglected without Indevotion, or even without Scandal. And ſuch alſo is the Annual Seaſon of Recollection in which we are now far advanced; not, I truſt, without having employed it, in ſome meaſure, to thoſe good Purpoſes for which it was intended. At ſuch Times as theſe, either when the Labours and Ordinary Occupations of Life ceaſe, or when Public Diverſions and Entertainments are forbidden; Then every One, the Noble and the Mean, the Wealthy and the Poor, hath it certainly in his Power, if it be but in his Heart, to retire: to ſtep aſide from the Hurry and Vanities of Life, and all the Allurements of Senſe, and to Examine, and Improve, and Enjoy himſelf in private.

That we may be all excited ſo to do, I ſhall proceed, in the next Place, to repreſent to You the ſeveral Advantages attend-

attending this Religious Practice; whether we conſider it, as a Means of effacing the ill Impreſſions made on our Minds in Daily Converſation, or as an Opportunity of purſuing further Degrees of Perfection and abounding in all the Methods of Spiritual Improvement. SERM. X.

The Advantages of the firſt kind, which it affords us, are plainly ſuch as Theſe; That it unites and fixes our ſcattered Thoughts; places us out of the Reach of the moſt Dangerous Temptations; frees us from the Inſinuating Contagion of Ill Examples, and huſhes and lays aſleep thoſe troubleſome Paſſions, which are the great Diſturbers of our Repoſe and Happineſs.

A Diſſipation of Thought is the Natural and Unavoidable Effect of our Converſing much in the World; where we cannot help ſquandering away a great deal of our Time upon Uſeleſs Objects, of no true Worth in themſelves, and of no real Concern to us. We roul on in a Circle of vain empty Pleaſures, and are delivered over continually from one ſlight Amuſe-

SERM. X.

ment to another; ever ſeemingly very Buſy, and ever really very Idle; applying ourſelves without Reſpite to That, which it becomes us moſt to neglect, and utterly neglectful of that One thing Neceſſary, which it becomes and behoves us moſt to purſue. This gives us by Degrees ſuch a Levity and Wantonneſs of Spirit, as refuſes Admittance to all ſerious Thoughts, and renders us incapable of Reflexion: Makes our Cloſet a Terrible Place to us, and Solitude a Burthen. To retrieve ourſelves from this vain, uncertain, roving, diſtracted way of thinking and living, it is requiſite to retire frequently, and to Converſe much with (what We above all things Love, and yet above all things hate to converſe with) Ourſelves; to inure our Minds to Recollection, to fix them on the greateſt and moſt concerning Objects, thoſe which Religion ſuggeſts, and which will, by their Importance, deſerve, and engage, and command our Attention; till the buſy Swarm of vain Images, that beſets us, be thoroughly diſperſed, and the

the ſeveral ſcattered Rays of Thought, by being thus collected together, do by little and little warm our Frozen Hearts, and at laſt produce an Holy Flame.

SERM. X.

The Expedience of Retirement is yet greater, as it removes us out of the way of the moſt preſſing and powerful Temptations that are incident to Human Nature. Ye all know by Experience, that Theſe meet us moſt frequently, and affect us moſt ſtrongly in Society; where our Senſes, the great Inlets of Temptation, are moſt awakened, and tempting Objects, by their Number and Nearneſs, make the moſt Vivid and Laſting Impreſſions upon us. * Indeed, there is no Place, no State, or Scene of Life, that hath not its proper and peculiar Temptations; even Solitude itſelf is not without them: but they are few, and faint, in Compariſon with thoſe to which our Appearance

* Ὁ δὲ τὴν ἐρημίαν ςέργων, πάντων μὲν ἔχει τὴν ἀτέλειαν· εἰδέποτε αὐτῷ καὶ λογισμὸς ἄτοπος ὑπογράψειέ τι τοιοῦτον, ἀλλ' ἀσθενὴς ἡ φαντασία καὶ ταχέως σβεσθῆναι δυναμένη, διὰ τὸ μὴ προσκεῖσθαι ἔξωθεν τὴν ἀπὸ τῆς θεωρίας ὕλην τῇ φλογί.

Χρυσος. περὶ Ἱερωσυν. p. 230. Edit per Hughes factæ.

SERM. X. on the great Stage of the World expoſes us; and whenever they attack us in our Receſſes, they do, or may find us prepared, and upon our Guard; we are then at Leiſure to encounter them, and have Helps near at Hand, which, if made Uſe of, will enable us to decline, or baffle them. Whereas, in Public, we are merely Paſſive to ſuch Impreſſions; which ſtrike our Minds ſo violently, and ſucceed each other ſo faſt, that we have no Opportunity, no Strength, no Inclination almoſt to withſtand them.

The great Riſque which Virtue runs in Company, is, from the Neighbourhood of Ill Examples which are of ſo Contagious a Nature, that, if we live much amongſt them, we ſhall as ſurely be corrupted by them, as he that often breathes in Ill Air, will at laſt partake of the Infection. 'Tis dangerous for the moſt innocent Perſon in the World to be too frequently and nearly a Witneſs to the Commiſſion of Vice and Folly. Such Views leſſen the Natural Horror we have for ſuch Actions; and render the Thoughts of

of them more Familiar, and leſs Diſpleaſing to us. Eſpecially, when we are uſed to ſee Ill Things practiſed by Perſons, whom we regard; the favourable Opinion we have of the Doer extends itſelf to the Action done; and leads us inſenſibly from ſeeing to approving, and from approving to imitating. And thus being (the very beſt of us) prone to do Evil, and Living in the midſt of Evil; being attacked thus from without, and betrayed from within; we are not capable of making an effectual Reſiſtance: The only Refuge, we have, is in Retreat, where we may at leiſure correct the Ill Impreſſions that have been made upon us; and by Diſuſe, and Diſtance, weaken the Force of thoſe Ill Influences which we could not wholly avoid. SERM. X.

Another Advantage which Retirement affords us, is, that it calms and compoſes all the Paſſions; thoſe eſpecially of the tumultuous kind; which, while the Buſineſs and Pleaſures of Life poſſeſs our Hearts, are under a Reſtleſs and Violent Agitation. We ſeldom mix long in Con-

SERM. X.

verſation, without meeting with ſome Accident that ruffles and diſturbs us; ſomewhat that plays either upon our Hopes, or our Fears; our Averſions, or Deſires. An Injurious, or Slighting Word is thrown out, which we think ourſelves obliged to reſent; or ſome Innocent Expreſſion of ours is miſinterpreted and reſented by Others, and that provokes a Ruturn. Our Enemy comes in our way, and kindles Thoughts of Averſion and Hatred in us; we look upon thoſe, who are above us in all the Advantages of Life, with Envious Eyes, and with Contempt on thoſe who are beneath us. Thus are we delivered over from Paſſion to Paſſion, toſſed and diſquieted in our Minds, during the Intercourſe we maintain with the World. But when we quit it, and retire, all theſe Winds are preſently laid, and there is a perfect Calm. The Objects, which excite us, being removed, our Appetites alſo Languiſh and Die away; we poſſeſs our Souls in Patience and Peace, and enjoy a profound Tranquillity and Reſt, the Pleaſure of which is great to thoſe

thoſe who are ſo happy as to have a Re- SERM.
liſh for it; and is enhanced by being al- X.
ways taſted with Innocence.

Wouldſt thou then be free from Envy and Scorn, from Anger and Strife; fly from the Occaſions of them; ſteal away from the great Scene of Paſſion and Buſineſs into thy Privacy, ſhut the Doors about thee, *Commune with thine Own* Pſ. iv. 4.
Heart in thy Chamber, and be ſtill. There all Animoſities are forgotten, all Purſuits, all Competition ceaſe; there all Marks of Diſtinction are laid aſide; the Great and the Lowly, the Prince and the Subject are upon the Level; equally under the Eye of one Common Maſter, equally deſirous of pleaſing Him, and mindleſs of leſſer Intereſts and Concerns. There the Vanities and Vexations of this World are ſhut out, and the Conſiderations of another are let in; and our Soul enjoys that ſweet Contentment and Repoſe, which it enjoys no where elſe, on this ſide Heaven.

I have hitherto conſidered the Uſefulneſs of Religious Retreat, with Reſpect

to

SERM. X. to ſome Ill Impreſſions made upon us in Converſation, which it removes: I ſhall now conſider it, as Productive of the Chief Chriſtian Graces and Virtues; inaſmuch as it affords us the beſt Opportunity of knowing *God*, and our *Selves*, and of taking all the proper Methods to reconcile and approve ourſelves to God, which are conſequent upon ſuch a Knowledge. For, tho' it be expedient for every Rank and Order of Men, yet it is more particularly advantageous to Penitents, to *go up* with our Saviour *into the Mountain, apart, to Pray.*

'Tis our Duty, and our Privilege, our Chief Honour and Happineſs, to be *acquainted with God*; and this Acquaintance can never be made, but, where we diveſt ourſelves of all other Acquaintance, in our Cloſets. When we have called off our Thoughts from Worldly Purſuits and Engagements, then (and not till then) are we at Liberty to fix them on the beſt, the moſt deſerving, and deſirable of Objects, GOD; to ſtudy his bleſſed Nature and Perfections, to imprint a filial Awe

Job xxii. 21.

of

of him on our Hearts, a lively Senſe of his perpetual Inſpection and Preſence; to abound in all the Methods of Devout Application to him, in Acts of Petition and Praiſe, of Joy and Wonder, of Submiſſion and Hope, of Love and Affiance; to open all our Wants, and impart all our Griefs to him, and to expreſs in the moſt ſignificant manner we are able, our Entire and Unlimited Dependance upon him; till, by often dwelling on ſuch Thoughts and Reflexions as theſe, we have made them Familiar, Habitual, and Natural to us; and can have as eaſy and Delightful a Recourſe to God, in all Accidents, and upon all Occaſions, as a Son hath to a Beloved and Loving Parent, who, he knows, is at all Times able to aſſiſt, and ready to receive him: In a word, till we can look up to God in Each Step of our Conduct, as the Supreme End and Guide of all our Actions, the fixed Centre of all our Wiſhes, Deſires, and Deſigns; till we bring ourſelves to Love Nothing in Competition with him, nothing but in order to the Enjoy-

SERM. X.

SERM. X. Enjoyment of him; and reſolve to Do nothing, and Be nothing, but what we are ſure will pleaſe him.

Can any thing refine, raiſe, or ennoble our Natures more than ſuch a Converſation as This, which is thus begun, improved, and perfected in Solitude; Shall we not think it worth our while, to ceaſe for a time from cultivating Uſeleſs and Periſhing Friendſhips with Men, that we may be the more at Leiſure, and the better qualified, to enter into this Divine Correſpondence, which is of the vaſteſt Concern to us, and upon which our Everlaſting Welfare depends?

While indeed our Hearts are deeply engaged in the Concerns of this World, we cannot well reliſh the Pleaſures of ſuch a Spiritual Commerce: But, after we have once accuſtomed and inured our ſelves to it, we ſhall find it the moſt delightful Entertainment of the Mind of Man, pleaſing as Light to the Eyes, *ſweeter than Honey and the Honey-Comb.* Senſual Men may make ſport with ſuch a Pretence, and call it Enthuſiaſm, and the

the Product of an Heated Imagination; but They, that taſte the Satisfaction, know it to be real, and would not part with it for all the Delights this World can afford: and which (in the diſparaging Phraſe of the Apoſtle) they *count but as Dung*, in Compariſon of *the Excellency of this Knowledge* of God *and Chriſt Jeſus*. SERM. X. Phil. iii. 8.

As Religious Retirement is a great Means of advancing us in the Knowledge of God, ſo doth it aſſiſt us towards attaining a True Knowledge of Ourſelves; towards ſearching and trying all our Ways, and getting a right Information concerning the State of our Conſciences. He that will thrive in his Temporal Affairs, muſt often balance his Accounts, examine his Gains, and his Loſſes, and ſee what Proportion they bear to each other; conſider, where his Conduct may have been faulty in any Reſpect, and how for the future to rectify it. The ſame Vigilance and Care is requiſite in Relation to our Spiritual Concerns alſo; and we can never exert it effectually but in

SERM. X. the Cloſet, where Privacy and Silence Befriend our Enquiries. When the Importunity of Outward Objects ceaſes, when the Noiſe and Avocations of a troubleſome World are at a Diſtance, we may enter upon theſe Searches without Difficulty, and finiſh them without Interruption. We may then look inwards, and take a Diſtinct View of what at Other times paſſes there unobſerved; of our hidden Inclinations and Averſions, of the Springs which ſecretly move us in all our Purſuits, of the Temptations that beſet us hardeſt, and moſt frequently foil us, of the Ground that we have loſt, or got, in our ſeveral Encounters. And when we are advanced thus far in the Knowledge of ourſelves, and of our Ruling Sins and Infirmities, we have taken the moſt uſeful and neceſſary Step towards abounding in the Three great Duties of the Penitent, *Contrition*, *Reſolution*, and *Prayer*.

Contrition is an holy Grief, excited by a lively Senſe, not only of the Puniſhment due to our Guilt (That the Schools

call *Attrition*) but likewiſe of the Infi- SERM.
nite Goodneſs of God, againſt which we X.
have offended; accompanied with a De-
teſtation of our Sin, and of ourſelves,
for the ſake of it. At this Act of the
Mind Repentance (properly ſpeaking)
begins; and this Godly Concern of Heart
is rarely attained, to be ſure, it can ne-
ver be duly exerted, and improved, but
in private. And, therefore, in the
Story of St. *Peter* we may obſerve, that,
as ſoon as a Conviction of his Guilt
had ſeized him, it is ſaid, that *he went* Matt.
out and wept bitterly; he withdrew into xxvi. 75.
a Sacred Place, where he might mourn
his own Fall with Freedom; where he
might feed, and raiſe up to a due Height
the Inward Auguiſh he felt, and Indulge
himſelf in all the Expreſſions of ſincere
Sorrow. The Wounds of Conſcience,
like other Wounds, though generally re-
ceived in Public, muſt always be healed
in Private: There they may be laid open
and ſearched to the Bottom, there the
raging Smart of them is beſt endured,
and there ſuitable Remedies are moſt
eaſily

SERM. X. easily, and most usefully applied; where Leisure, and Rest, Silence, and a Proper Discipline assist the Patient, and promote the Cure.

The next Step to Contrition, is *Resolution*, or a firm immutable Purpose of Heart, never more to allow ourselves in that Transgression, which we now abominate, and deplore. And, in order to the forming such a well-weighed and stable Resolution, there must be a calm and clear Foresight of the Difficulties which may attend the Execution of it, and a just Computation of our Own Strength to bear up against them; we must deliberately consider under what Circumstances the Temptation, against which we are now arming ourselves, hath beset us hardest, and how, for the future, we may best decline them; what Helps and Supports we have by Experience found most useful, and how, in the Day of Trial, we may be secure of them; to what a broken dispirited State of Mind we have already deduced ourselves, by so often and lightly departing from what we

we had purpoſed; and, with how much greater Difficulty, every time that we give way, we recover our Ground. I need not prove to you, that theſe, and the like Reflexions, which are neceſſary towards our reſolving well and wiſely, can never be dwelt on, in all their due Compaſs and Force, but at Leiſure, and in Sacred Retirement. Doubtleſs, the good Pſalmiſt had been ſome Time in his Cloſet, and on his Knees, when he uttered thoſe Emphatical Words; *I have ſworn, and am ſtedfaſtly purpoſed, to keep thy Righteous Judgments.* Pſal. cxix. 100.

SERM. X.

But of all the Duties of the Penitent, that which Privacy beſt Qualifies us for, is * *Prayer*, which it enables us to perform in ſuch a Manner, as is likely to be moſt prevalent and effectual. Great indeed is the Excellence and Advantage

* Τινὸς ἕνεκεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος ἀναβαίνει, παιδεύων ἡμᾶς ὅτι καλὸν ἡ ἐρημία καὶ μόνωσις, ὅταν ἐπιτυγχάνειν δέῃ τῷ θεῷ. Διὰ τοῦτο ζυνιχῶς εἰς τὰς ἐρήμους ἄπεισι, κἀκεῖ δ.ανυκτερεύει πολλάκις εὐχόμενος, παιδεύων ἡμᾶς καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ καιροῦ καὶ τὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ τόπου θηρᾶσθαι ἐν ταῖς εὐχαῖς ἀταραξίαν· ὑσυχίας γὰρ μήτηρ ἡ ἔρημος, καὶ γαλήνη, καὶ λιμὴν ἀπάντων ἀπαλλάττουσα θορύβων ἡμᾶς. Chryſoſt. ad Matt. xiv. 23.

SERM. X.

of Public Devotions, as they teſtify our Common Reverence of the Divine Being, as they are beſt fitted to implore or to acknowledge Public Bleſſings, and as they excite a Public Emulation in the Breaſts of ſincere Worſhipers. However, in ſome reſpects, they muſt yield the Pre-eminence to Cloſet-Prayer; particularly in this, That they are not ſo well calculated, as That, to procure Eaſe and Repoſe of Conſcience to the Sinner, and to adjuſt particular Accounts between God and our Souls. For it is of ſpecial Uſe to this Purpoſe, in theſe Three Reſpects; as it affords us the beſt Opportunity of being *Fixed*, *Fervent*, and *Circumſtantial* in our Addreſſes to God.

In the Solemn Service of the Sanctuary, let us endeavour never ſo much to prevent *Diſtractions*, we ſhall now and then be ſenſible of them: Outward Objects will break in upon our Senſes, and divert the Application of our Minds; even the Length of the Office, and the Daily Return of the ſame Forms, will,

to

to Perſons not rightly Qualified, and Diſ- SERM.
poſed, occaſion Spiritual Languors and X.
Wanderings. And this is not the Caſe
only of Stated Forms; the ſame Incon-
venience doth, in a much higher Degree,
belong to Unpremeditated Prayer; the
Hearers of which muſt firſt judge of the
Fitneſs, both of the Matter and the Ex-
preſſion, before they can reaſonably join
in what they hear. And thus the No-
velty of the Phraſe, inſtead of fixing,
breaks and divides the Attention of a
ſincere Worſhiper; his Curioſity indeed
may be awakened by this Means, but his
Devotion is certainly checked and ſuſ-
pended. Now theſe Obſtacles are all
removed, theſe Inconveniences are pre-
vented, when we pray in Private. We
are then placed immediately under the
Eye of God, which awes us; but under
no Other Eyes, and in the Neighbour-
hood of no other Objects, which might
divert or diſcompoſe us: We are at Li-
berty to employ that Part of our Time
in the Performance of this Service, when
we find ourſelves beſt diſpoſed for it;

SERM. X.

to make Choice of our own Thoughts, and our own Words; ſuch, as are beſt ſuited to our preſent Neceſſities and Deſires: And what is thus paſſing within ourſelves, we cannot but perceive, and attend to. We may break off from the Duty, whenever we find our Attention flags; and return to it at a more ſeaſonable Opportunity.

Nor are we capable, at ſuch Times, of being more *Fixed* only, but likewiſe more *Fervent* and Inflamed. True Religion is ever modeſt and reſerved in its Demeanor, when it appears in Public, jealous of doing any thing that may favour of Vanity and Oſtentation; unwilling to allow itſelf in any ſuch Earneſtneſs of Speech, or Singularity of Behaviour, as may call off the Eyes and Ears of Others to obſerve them: It contents itſelf, for the moſt part, with a Compoſed and Serious Look, with a Simple and Unaffected Carriage. But when Public Regards and Reſtraints are taken off, the Pious Soul may then let itſelf looſe into the higheſt Fervors of Zeal, into the freeſt

Raptures

Raptures of Thought, and into a ſuitable Vehemence and Wrath of Expreſſion: There is no ſort of Holy Addreſs, which it is not then allowed to make uſe of; no outward Signs of Devotion and Reverence, which it may not decently abound in. SERM. X.

There is yet another great Advantage that attends our Private Devotions; They give us Leave to be as Expreſs and *Particular* as we pleaſe in our Repreſentations. In the Church, the Sinner and the Saint, Men of all Ranks, Diſtinctions, and Attainments in Virtue, muſt join in the ſame Common Forms: And though each of them may, by a ſudden Glance of Mind, adapt the General Words to his own Circumſtances; yet one Branch of the Service preſſes too faſt upon another, to admit of any Pauſe between them. And They, therefore, who lie under the Load of any Particular Guilt, riſe not from their Knees with ſo much Comfort, as they would have done, had they been at Liberty to dwell upon it, and confeſs it in all its Aggravations. This

Liberty

SERM. X. Liberty their Cloſet, and that alone, can afford them. There they may expatiate as much as they pleaſe upon their Wants and Unworthineſs: There they may pour out all their Complaints to God, and lay open all their Griefs and Fears, and ſend up all their Thanks and Acknowledgments: There Importunities are not forbidden, Repetitions are not unbecoming; but they may perſiſt Knocking till it is Opened to them, and Aſking till they have Obtained.

Theſe are ſome of the many Spiritual Advantages, which the preſent Hours of holy Recollection, when well employed, will be ſure to afford us. And God grant, that all of us may, as we have Opportunity and Leiſure, ſo employ them!

Indeed, the greater our Sphere of Public Action is, the leſs Time we can allow ourſelves to ſpend in theſe Religious Exerciſes; but ſtill Some of it is due to them, nor can any Secular Cares, or Avocations whatſoever, wholly excuſe us from paying it. Our Bleſſed Lord, we are ſure, had very great Buſineſs to tranſact with Man-

1375

Mankind, and a very ſhort Time in which SERM.
to finiſh it; and yet, during his Three X.
Years Converſation on Earth, we find
him often exchanging the Duties of the
Active and Public State, for thoſe of the
Solitary and Private; *ſending the Multitudes away, and going up into the Mountain, apart, to Pray.* And we are ſure, that in This, as well as Other Reſpects, he *left us an Example, that we ſhould follow his Steps.* 2 Pet. ii. 21.

To Him, together with the Father and the Bleſſed Spirit, Three Perſons, and One God, be aſcribed all Majeſty, Dominion, and Power, now and for evermore. Amen.

FINIS.

00067053

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016